

Look East Policy India and Myanmar Pitching for Greater Connectivity

Conference Report

4 August 2014
New Delhi, India



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Burma Centre Delhi

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India and Myanmar: Pitching for Greater Connectivity

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Contents

1.	Introduction <i>Dr Ash Narain Roy</i>	5
2.	Inaugural Speech <i>Dr Ajay M. Gondane</i>	7
3.	Keynote Address <i>Ambassador (Rtd) Rajiv Bhatia</i>	8
4.	Relations between Divided Tribes: NE India and Western Myanmar <i>Dr. Walter Fernandes</i>	10
5.	A critical Evaluation of India's Engagement with Myanmar <i>Prof. Baladas Ghoshal</i>	20
6.	India's Development Cooperation Projects in Myanmar <i>Mr C. S. Kuppuswamy</i>	28
7.	New Geopolitics and Paradigm Change <i>Salai Isaac Khen</i>	38
8.	Emergence of Subnational Governance in Myanmar <i>Nyo Nyo Thinn</i>	39
9.	A note on China Factor in India- Myanmar Relations <i>Sanjay Pulipaka</i>	42
10.	India-Myanmar-China Relations <i>Srikanth Kondapalli</i>	44
11.	India and Myanmar in Regional and Sub-regional Multilateralism <i>K. Yhome</i>	46
12.	India - Myanmar Military Cooperation – Securing the Commons <i>Rahul K Bhonsle</i>	48
13.	Building Democracy in Myanmar: Challenges Within <i>Sithu Aung Myint</i>	53
14.	India-Myanmar Border Development – Nagaland Perspective <i>K. Filip Sumi</i>	55
15.	India–Myanmar Border Development - Mizoram Perspective <i>C. Lalremruata</i>	58
16.	India-Myanmar Border Areas: Connectivity, Prospects and Concerns - First-hand Account <i>Kabi Gangmei</i>	64

Introduction

Ash Narain Roy

Director, Institute of Social Sciences

The Look East Policy, enunciated by the Narasimha Rao Government, marked a new defining moment and a long-term strategic shift in India's foreign policy. India recognised the strategic and economic importance of Southeast Asia with which it had historic trade, cultural and civilizational ties. The LEP was not just an external economic policy blueprint or a journey of openness and global economic integration, it marked a strategic shift in India's vision and its place in the comity of nations. This visionary policy created a new framework for deepening economic, political, cultural and people-to-people ties between India and Myanmar, in particular. Thanks to the Look East Policy, India's gaze is now falling on Southeast and East Asian region. What took India so long to effect such a change? Well, the reasons are not far to seek—the Cold War, India-China war and 50 years of inward-looking economic policies. India thus slipped into economic self-exile.

The second phase of the Look East Policy, which began in 2003, extended the coverage of LEP from Australia to East Asia, with ASEAN as its core. The new phase, thus, marked a shift in focus from trade to wider economic and security cooperation, political partnerships, and physical connectivity through road and rail links.

For long, since European geographers and cartographers called the shots, the notion of Asia rolled steadily eastward. In Western minds, Asia meant primarily China and Japan, maps and organization charts tended to group India with the Middle East. With India's Look East Policy, the notions of Asia have changed. Today maps and other geographic concepts have begun to reflect India's resurgent links with our eastern neighbours.

Thanks to Look East Policy and India turning outward, the country has regained a place corresponding more closely to its role in pre-colonial history. India was at the geographic centre of the great trade routes that stretched from Venice to Japan and the Spice Islands.

If India has looked east, South East Asian countries too have begun to look west. India's integration with the region has given them some comfort given China's aggressive muscle-flexing. India may be an elephant but China is elephant in the room.

Prime Minister P V Narasimha Rao was a man of great vision. As we all know, it was during his stewardship that India revived its links with South East Asia.

His stint as External Affairs Minister had provided him the insight and vision to look beyond the shores and revive historical and cultural links with the East to convert them into an economic and trade partnership.

India's compatibility with the South East Asian countries with regard to better regional cooperation lies in the fact of its abstinence from exhibiting hegemonistic ambitions, making it more benign towards South East Asia.

The Look-East Policy is expected to usher in a new era of development for the North East through network of pipelines, connectivity, communication and trade.

There are several factors that have propelled India to cultivate closer ties with Myanmar. These include peace, stability and development in the North-East, transit trade, greater economic opportunities and protecting strategic interests. India's Look East Policy received a major fillip thanks to the introduction of open door economic reform that Myanmar had initiated in the late 1980s and later to Yangon's response to the democratic reform process.

India sees Myanmar as a springboard for its engagement with South East and East Asia and it remains a vital link in our strategic partnership with ASEAN. India sees its partnership with Myanmar not merely as a reaffirmation of ties with neighboring countries or as an instrument of economic development, but also as an integral part of our vision of a stable, secure and prosperous Asia and its surrounding Indian Ocean and Pacific regions.

India has undertaken some bilateral and multilateral projects for boosting connectivity between the North-East and South East Asia. The important ongoing and potential infrastructure projects in this regard are Moreh-Tamu-Kalewa Road, India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway, Trans Asian Highway, India-Myanmar rail linkages, Kaladan Multimodal project, the Stilwell road, Myanmar-India- Bangladesh gas or oil pipeline, Tamanthi Hydroelectricity project and optical fiber network between North East India and South East Asia.

Economic geography is undergoing a sea change. India's relationship with Burma and other countries in the region has come a long way from the early 1990s. While India continues to see ASEAN as the core of East Asia, India's interests have broadened to include the western Pacific as a whole. Rising India's emphasis on pragmatic cooperation rather than ideological posturing and its cooperative maritime strategy makes New Delhi a new strategic factor in Asia Pacific.

The North-East is the key stakeholder in India's Look East Policy. The location of North-East is such that it shares only 2% of its border with the Indian mainland whereas 98% is surrounded by various neighbouring countries. There are huge geo-economic potentials. But history shows that while dealing with the region, geo-political considerations have always dominated over geo-economic factors. The Look East Policy can change that constraint into huge opportunity for the region.

Connectivity requires a sense of greater urgency. Building of physical infrastructure needs to go hand-in-hand with creation of soft infrastructure along the connectivity corridors.

The LEP has given us a roadmap for regional economic integration that can reinforce growth and accelerate development across the region. It will also enhance mutual stakes in regional stability and security.

It is hoped this compilation of conference papers will provide a useful source of information and insights into the complexities of the region. It is also hoped the collection of papers will be useful to policy-makers, researchers and students.

Inaugural Speech

Dr. Ajay M Gondane

Joint Secretary, Border Connectivity, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India

In keeping with the high priority that India attaches to enhancing connectivity between ASEAN and India and the emphasis on regional connectivity, the Ministry of External affairs, Government of India now has a full-fledged Border Connectivity division. Connectivity has become a new buzzword in academic thinking as well as bureaucratic circles. Today key instruments in support of connectivity are in place in the form of enhanced means of transport and communication. And if these means are available today, then what is lacking and what is the gap that needs to be filled in is something that all must ponder.

India is making a conscious endeavor to strengthen connectivity in our eastern neighbourhood. The Indo-Myanmar friendship road is an illustrating case in point. The Sittwe to Paletwa Inland Water Transport is almost complete. Imphal-Moreh Tamu road is in working condition, Land Custom Station in Awangkhu (Nagaland) will be revived while the Land Customs Stations (LCS) in Arunachal Pradesh have been identified though these are yet to be operational.

While these connecting corridors are important, what is equally important is to link them with production centres and feeder roads etc. to make an impact.

Connectivity projects in order to become connectivity corridors need to involve the people of the region in a major way.

People of North-East stand to benefit the most from the connectivity corridors. In fact, the success of these efforts will be seen in terms of how much they benefit from such opening.

Therefore, connectivity per-se is not sufficient; what is imperative is the will of the people. Today, the region is aspiring for growth and progress. Personally, I have seen and witnessed that the people have become aspirational. In towns and cities in North East and Myanmar, there are telling signs and hoardings that indicate the need and desire for excellence and skills. A large number of people from the North-East have moved to other parts of the country, taking advantage of opportunities. That gives us hope.

Keynote Address

Ambassador Rajiv K. Bhatia

*Director General, Indian Council of World Affairs and
former Ambassador of India to Myanmar*

In the beginning of the initiation of Look East Policy, the then Prime Minister of India P.V. Narasimha Rao in his address in Singapore in 1994, did not use the term “Look East.” Instead, he used the term “Asia – Pacific”. Later in the 1990s, India shifted its focus on East Asia and the Pacific. Until then there was no Look East. In a sense the term Look East policy was not coined by the Government of India. It is a term framed by the media, and later used by the diplomats. Eventually it came to be widely used by everyone.

At the heart of the LEP is the development of deeper relations with our eastern neighbours in every sector. The policy has completed three decades now. The first decade was the level of Sectoral Dialogue in 1992. Then came the second phase which saw Summit-level engagements in 2002. The third and ongoing level of engagement is from 2012 onwards during which the emphasis has been on establishing strategic partnerships. Today even the government is talking about “Enhanced LEP,” a term used ever since April 2014. In the third decade now, the canvas has become much wider. In this enhanced LEP the stakeholders have widened which includes China, Japan, Republic of Korea, etc. This indicates that the focus of LEP is not only ASEAN but bilateral relationships as well.

In the past 20 years India has done enough ground work and taken steps to strengthen bilateral and regional relations with ASEAN. The next level is beyond the ASEAN dimension.

About the geo-strategic, political and economic importance of East Asia, geopolitical pundits have been saying that the 21st century will be the Asian century. But this enthusiasm seems to be declining, with the rise of China which is very impressive. In any discussion on LEP, China’s rise is seen somewhat as a disturbing factor that should be kept in mind.

Another major issue is the China-US rivalry. Besides the two power centres, we have India and Japan. In such a scenario there is a need to balance, to maintain an equitable and effective balance of power. If not, there is a likelihood of a new phase of cold war or a military conflict.

Meanwhile as Myanmar opens up and more and more information keeps coming out, the response of and questions about Myanmar are also changing. While people are skeptical, the change process seems to be sustained slowly. Initially it was doubtful, but the enthusiasm grows and now it appears that Myanmar is really heading towards democracy. In the current context, the emerging question is the American Administration. And at this stage the internal factor looks more prominent. But enthusiasm is slowly diminishing and reality is setting in, such as issue of sectarianism in Rakhine state, the constitution, and Aung San Suu Kyi. The major concern is whether the amendment to the constitution will take place before 2015 elections which will allow Aung San Suu Kyi to contest. These are some of the pertinent questions among scholars and this has to be deliberated in a platform such as this.

Questions also arise what would be India’s response and action if the reforms and democratic opening in Myanmar fail.

The fundamentals of connectivity are close relations between the people, between society and between governments. The Government of India worked very hard and from 2010 onwards relations are on firmer grounds.

Academic talk is no substitute for concrete action in the development of the connectivity corridors. Other stakeholders need to be motivated, and not just the Ministry of External Affairs. More funding is needed for the projects and better high-level management and visible and sustained action. The authorities should issue authoritative notes on when the projects, like Trilateral Highway and the Kaladan Multimodal Project, will be completed - or the deadlines will keep lengthening.

Relations between Divided Tribes: NE India and Western Myanmar

Dr. Walter Fernandes

Director of Research, Animation and Research Centre, Yangon

Several tribes (ethnic communities) are divided between four States of North Eastern India (NEI) and the Chin and Kachin States and Sagaing Region of Myanmar. The Naga live in parts of Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh in NEI and the Kachin State and Sagaing Region of Myanmar. The Mizo live in Mizoram while more than 30 Chin tribes inhabit the Chin State and some neighbouring areas. The Kuki are in Manipur and in the Tamu area of Sagaing Region. The Paite live in the Mizoram-Chin State-Manipur border areas. The administrative systems and economies of these two countries differ but the tribes have close cultural and economic relations among themselves. By and large the relations are good but there are also some areas of tension particularly between the Chin and the Mizo. The Cross-Border study was meant to look at the nature of relations between the divided communities particularly in the context of the partial opening up of Myanmar. The tribes have been in contact with each other during the decades of division but the official attitude to the links has changed according to the political situation of the countries. The study is based on the conviction that apart from the official structures and tribal communities also civil society groups can play a role in maintaining good relations between peoples divided by an international boundary. The study was done in two phases, the NEI part during the first half of 2013 and the Myanmar side in 2014. The report of the latter is being completed. Its data used in this paper are from fieldwork and the preliminary analysis after tabulation. The focus of this exploratory study is family, community and trade relations. Civil society groups can act on it.² Basic to the study is the impact of the division on the tribes. They have some cross border relations but would like to express their unity with a sense of being one community.

1. The Land and the People

The Cross-border study was done in order to better understand the issue and find ways of dealing with it. The first step in it is to know the type of people and their administrative systems.

The Administrative Divisions

Each country has its own administrative system but both have some provisions for the tribes or ethnic communities. In Myanmar the Chin, Kayah, Kachin, Karen, Mon, Rakhine and Shan States are for the ethnic communities. The Ayeyarwady, Bago, Magway, Mandalay, Sagaing, Tanintharyi and Yangon Regions in the plains are inhabited predominantly by the Bamar (Burman). The study was done only in the Chin State and Sagaing Region. The Chin are recognised as an ethnic minority³. The Naga are not a recognised minority group but have some administrative autonomy in the Naga Townships.

Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura are the 7 NEI States popularly known as Seven Sisters.⁴ Each State has its own administrative structure but some areas have the Sixth Schedule or other constitutional safeguards. The Sixth Schedule applies to the North Cachar Hills, Karbi Anglong autonomous councils and the Boro Territorial Council in Assam, the whole of Meghalaya, one district of Tripura and the Pawi, Lakher and Chakma of Mizoram. The Constitution was amended in 1963 to include Article 371A to bring

Nagaland under the tribal customary laws and in 1986 to insert Article 371G for the same in Mizoram. Safeguards like exemption from the Manipur Land and Land Revenue Act 1960 are made for the tribes of Manipur without the Sixth Schedule. The Arunachal tribes run their civil affairs under the customary law without constitutional recognition but the State has the *Panchayati raj*, not the District Autonomous Council (Nongbri 2003; Hansaria 2005).

The People Studied

Arunachal Pradesh which shares its borders with Assam and Nagaland in the south, Myanmar in the east, Bhutan in the west and Tibet to the north has an area of 83,743 sq km and is home to more than 25 tribes. Only the Thangsa and the Wangchoo were included in the study. Surrounded by Nagaland in the north, Mizoram to the south, Assam in the west and Myanmar in the East, Manipur has at least 29 communities belonging to the Tibeto-Burmese stock scattered over its 22,347 sq km. The main groups are the Meitei and Pangan (Muslim) who inhabit the Imphal Valley and the tribes from the Naga and Kuki families who inhabit the hill areas. Only the Tangkhul Nagas and the Kuki were studied.

Table 1: Some Tribes Divided between North East India and Myanmar

State	Tribes in the North East	Tribes in Myanmar
Arunachal	Konyak, Nocte, Tangsang, Wangcha	Konyak, Nocte, Thangshang, Wangchoo
Manipur	Kuki near Moreh; Paite in Churchandpur, district, Tangkhul in Ukhrul district	Kuki-Thadou at Tamu, Paite near Churchandpur, Tangkhul near Ukhrul
Mizoram	Mizo, Paite, 70,000 Chin	Around 30 Chin tribes
Nagaland	Chakesang, Sangtam, Khyaniungam, Konyak	Konyak and other Naga tribes inhabiting four townships

Mizoram at the southern end of the Northeast, shares its national borders with Tripura, Assam, and Manipur and its international boundary with Myanmar and Bangladesh. Apart from the Mizo family, its people include the Chakma, Pawi and some smaller tribes (Das 1990: 167-170). The Mizo and the Paite were studied. Nagaland is surrounded by Assam in the west, Arunachal and Assam in the north, Myanmar in the east and Manipur in the south. Among its tribes speaking some 60 dialects of the Sino-Tibetan family are the Angami, Ao, Chakhesang, Chan, Khemungan, Konyak, Lotha, Phom, Pochury, Rengma, Sangtam, Sema, Yimchunger and Zeliang (Bareh 2001: 178). The Konyak were studied.

The Methodology followed

In order to understand the relations, two divided tribes each were studied in Arunachal, Manipur and Mizoram and one in Nagaland. On the Myanmar side the Konyak speak the language of their counterparts in Nagaland and are ruled by the same chief on two sides of the border. So they were treated as one community and only three of their villages were chosen. The Tangkhul of Manipur speak different languages but all or most of them understand Ukhrul Tangkhul. So they were treated as one tribe and only two of their villages were included in the study in Manipur. But since on the Myanmar side not all of them know Ukhrul Tangkhul, two of their sub-tribes or clans were chosen for the study. The Thangsa of Arunachal Pradesh belong to a bigger family. On the Myanmar side they are divided into many smaller tribes so two of them were chosen. The four tribes that came together as Mizo speak the same language. But the Chin on the Myanmar side are divided into more than 30 tribes and do not understand each other. Moreover, in the Chin State one found differences also between the communities on its south

and north. So two tribes each were chosen in the north and the south of the State. Both the Thadou and Kuki were studied in Sagaing. Thus, in Myanmar the community, not the State, was the basis of the choice. That does not change the criteria of comparison since the communities are central to both.

Table 2: The Villages Chosen and the Sample interviewed

Village State	Age Tribe	15-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60+		Total		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Arunachal Pradesh																
Therimka	Thangsa	0	0	0	0	6	0	6	0	0	0	0	0	12	0	12
Injan	Thangsa	0	0	2	0	5	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	10	2	12
Khonsa	Wangcha	0	0	7	6	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	11	6	17
Chongkow	Wangcha	0	0	1	0	14	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	15	2	17
Manipur																
Therimka	Tangkhum	0	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	3	2	5	6	11
Injan	Tangkhum	0	0	1	1	1	1	3	1	0	0	3	0	8	3	11
Khonsa	Kuki	0	0	0	0	3	1	6	0	0	1	1	0	10	2	12
Chongkow	Kuki	0	0	1	0	3	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	6	5	11
Mizoram																
Ngaizawl	Mizo	0	0	1	1	2	1	2	2	0	0	3	2	8	6	14
Zotlang	Paitei	0	0	4	1	1	0	4	0	0	0	4	0	13	1	14
Zote	Mizo & Paitei	0	0	2	0	3	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	7	1	8
Ngur	Mizo & Paitei	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	3	0	0	6	2	8	6	14
Nagaland																
Longwa	Konyak	0	0	9	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	10	2	12
Wangti	Konyak	0	0	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	12
Chen Moho	Konyak	0	0	8	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	4	12
ChLoisho	Konyak	0	0	6	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	6	12
Total	NE India	0	0	50	27	40	12	32	8	1	2	22	7	145	56	201
Chin State																
Ngalang	Thantlang	0	0	2	0	2	2	1	2	5	0	0	0	10	4	14
Hlam Phei	Thantlang	0	0	3	0	0	2	4	0	2	0	1	0	10	2	12
ThuangRam	Thantlang	0	0	2	0	2	1	3	1	3	0	0	0	10	2	12
Lung Cawipi	Mara	1	2	1	0	2	2	2	2	0	1	1	0	7	7	14
Ngaphaite	Mara	0	3	2	0	0	1	2	1	1	1	3	0	8	6	14
Ngaphaite L	Mara	0	0	2	1	2	1	3	2	0	0	0	1	7	5	12
Selawn	Falam	1	0	1	3	1	2	2	1	2	0	0	0	7	6	13
Singai	Falam	0	0	3	2	1	2	1	0	1	2	1	0	7	6	13
New nahTh	Falam	0	0	3	2	1	1	1	1	3	1	1	0	8	6	14
Zimpi	Tedim	1	0	0	0	3	2	2	2	3	1	0	0	9	5	14
Zimte	Tedim	0	0	0	0	1	2	0	2	4	3	1	0	6	7	13
Fartlang	Tedim	0	0	3	2	0	1	1	3	2	1	0	0	6	7	13
Sagaing Division																
NanMun ung	Kuki	1	1	3	1	1	0	0	2	1	0	2	0	8	4	12
Phai Len	Kuki	2	0	5	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	10	4	14
Tung Cho	Kuki	0	1	2	3	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	0	7	7	14
NanMunTar	Thadou	0	1	3	3	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	5	8	13
ZangLen hai	Thadou	1	0	2	2	2	1	0	3	1	0	1	1	7	7	14
HkoMun om	Thadou	1	0	2	1	1	3	1	1	2	0	1	0	9	4	13
Pan Sat	Tangkhum	0	0	5	3	2	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	10	4	14
Sum Ra	Tangkhum	0	0	2	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	4	2	6
Phon Thret	Tangkhum	0	0	1	3	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	4	6	10

Village State	Age Tribe	15-19		20-29		30-39		40-49		50-59		60+		Total		Total
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Nga Can	Tanghkul	0	0	1	2	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	5	2	7
Heing Kut 1	Tanghkul	0	0	0	4	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	0	3	6	9
Heing Kut 2	Tanghkul	0	0	0	0	1	0	4	0	1	0	0	0	6	0	6
Longri	Thangsha(Shecyu)	0	0	3	7	0	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	7	7	14
Thoilo	Thangsha	0	0	0	0	3	0	5	4	1	0	0	0	9	4	13
Nyangching	Thangsha	0	0	0	0	1	0	6	5	0	1	0	0	7	6	13
Pangsau	Thangsha (Bote)	0	0	1	2	2	0	1	2	2	1	1	2	7	7	14
Thaho 1	Thangsha	0	0	0	1	2	2	0	1	3	0	1	0	6	4	10
Lunglong	Thangsha	0	0	1	3	0	4	4	0	1	0	3	0	9	7	16
Tongten	Konyak	0	0	0	0	3	5	3	0	0	1	2	0	8	6	14
Yokom	Konyak	0	0	0	2	0	5	0	2	3	0	4	0	7	9	16
Nalim	Konyak	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	4	2	1	0	0	4	6	10
Total	Total Myanmar	8	8	53	48	42	47	56	48	52	17	26	5	237	173	410
Grand Total	NEI & MYN	8	8	103	75	82	59	88	56	53	19	48	12	382	229	611

In NEI 4 villages were selected in each State while in Myanmar 3 villages were chosen per tribe. On both sides of the border 10 to 12 families were interviewed per village. The sample on both sides was the family from which a main respondent was chosen and the family was told about it. Work in a village began with discussion with 3 types of groups, men and women separately, and young men and women together. The assumption of the decision to have discussion with young men and women together was that gender relations among the youth are better than those among the elders, and that young women would be free to express their opinion. It turned out to be a false assumption. Men dominate among the youth almost as much as among the elders. Family interviews helped the members to reflect on their situation while providing objective data to the researchers. The main respondent's views were recorded and tabulated. What the remaining members said is used as field notes in the body of the report.

The field workers were told to choose an equal number of male and female respondents and people of different age groups, but they did not. In NEI the coordinators concentrated more on data collection than on the process of reflection by the family, and chose men, particularly seniors, since they gave more information than women did. In Myanmar there was only one female investigator since it was not possible for women to live or travel in these areas with poor privacy and security. As a result young men were chosen as investigators and they found it difficult to interview young women. It affected the choice of the respondents both by gender and by age groups. However, 42.2 per cent of the respondents in Myanmar are women against 27.86 per cent in NEI.

2. Relations between the Two Sides

What follows is the report based on an analysis of the data that have been tabulated and analysed and are being written in the form of a report. This section will highlight some the issues.

The Type of Relations

To begin with relations between the two sides, there is clear difference between the Naga and the Chin.⁵ Both of them depend more on India than on Myanmar but the relationship is not one-sided. They have had many decades of mutual dependence. For example, the Mizo said that during their nationalist struggle some of them took refuge in Myanmar while some Chin leaders came to Mizoram. Common to the Naga and the Chin is the regular movement between

the borders, inter-marriage and cultural exchange. But inter-marriage is true more of Arunachal than the others, more in Changlang than Tirap.

There is much greater dependence in trade. Most Konyak and Tangkhul villages of Myanmar depend on the Indian side for supplies. Even the Konyak chief's house is divided between Nagaland and the Hukong Valley. Most shops are in Nagaland and people from the other side come there to buy goods. Many Konyak and Tangkhul families go to Dimapur off and on for supplies. In fact, many of them know Nagamese the *lingua franca* of Nagaland. NSCN-K is active among the Konyak in Myanmar and has signed a ceasefire agreement with the Government of Myanmar. The highest interaction is in Mizoram but of a different type. Some 70,000 to 100,000 Chins live in Mizoram and there is some tension on the issue in Mizoram and resentment among the Chin. One small group of Chins in Mizoam is of traders and the majority do the lowest paid unskilled work. Some people in the border town of Champai claim that Chin traders control most trade in their area, buy land and make use of facilities such as jobs in the State. When there is reaction against the traders, more often than not it is diverted to the labourers.

Transport Infrastructure

The dependence on the Indian side has to be attributed firstly to the poor transport infrastructure. In the Sagaing Region India has built a road to the nearest village on the Myanmar side from some border outposts in Nagaland and Arunachal but there is no road connecting these villages to the rest of Myanmar. The coordinators of the study had to travel for 3 days by boat and motor cycle to reach the Thangsha and Tangkhul areas and 5 days to the Konyak area from Mandalay. The link with Mandalay is better from southern Sagaing and Chin State. There is a road from Mandalay to the capital city of Sagaing. Asian Highway I connects Imphal and Moreh with Tamu and onwards with Kalay and Mandalay. A road connects Champai in Mizoram with Kalay, another road connects Hakkah the Chin capital with Mizoram on one side and Kalay on the other. A new link with Mizoram will be established when the Sittwe port is ready. Thus, fairly good transport exists between the Chin State and Mandalay and onwards with Yangon. The roads are in a bad shape but the Government of India seems to be planning to improve them in order to start an Imphal-Mandalay bus service. Also the Champai-Kalay road will be improved.

That is not the case with the villages, especially in the Chin State. The distance between villages is big and it is more in Chin State than in Naga townships. Around 40 per cent of the Chin respondents mentioned lack of an approach road between villages and of a link with the Champai-Kalay road as a major problem. There are mud tracks in the Naga area on which one can travel by motor bike. Even such roads are rare in much of the Chin State. As a result, children find it difficult to go to school, people are unable to use the health facilities and sell their produce since they cannot go to a central place. They do not have a market for the region. Outsiders come to the village to buy the produce at a low price.

Subsistence Agriculture

The next problem is subsistence agriculture. Most of the Konyak and all the Chin villages depend on *jhum*. Land in this case is managed as a common property resource of the clan (CPR) over which the individual family has usufruct rights. The Thangsa of Arunachal as well their counterparts in Myanmar have a compromise system of the community recognising individually owned land because they combine wet cultivation with *jhum*. The Konyak have modified their system in order to combine community with individually owned land (Nongkynrih 2009). Some Tangkhul practise terrace or even wet rice cultivation and combine it with *jhum*. It also means

that they have a combination of individual and common land (Shimray 2009). That is why the respondents were asked about the area cultivated, not what they owned.

Deforestation and infertile soil add to the problem. The soil in the Naga areas is fertile. Many springs make terrace cultivation possible in some Tangkhul villages. But land in the Chin State is infertile and has very few springs. Their holdings are small. Of the 158 Chin families interviewed 18 (11.39%) are landless, 22 (18.93%) cultivate less than an acre each and 104 (65.82%) have 1 to 3 acres. Thus over 90 per cent of them are unable to live on the produce of their land or grow a second crop because of lack of irrigation. Only around 10 per cent of them grow potatoes, ground nuts and vegetables as a second crop. A third of the families have some members supplementing their income through daily wage work in the village or its neighbourhood, and 20 per cent have someone working “far away” mostly in Mizoram. Land in Mizoram too is infertile and has very few springs. But education helps many of them to get salaried jobs. In fact, 22 of the 100 families studied in Mizoram and Manipur have main income other than agriculture. They are from the border areas with fewer facilities than the capital. The Chin go in search of unskilled jobs since they do not have the possibility of education for a job as an alternative.

Another solution of a big number of Chin families is to cut trees for sale as firewood or timber. Around 40 of them (25.32%) have the forest as their main source of income but some 300 cut trees in the lean season. However, relatively few Nagas in the villages studied do it for an income though Sagaing, Kachin and Thanithayi are the main areas of timber smuggling in Myanmar (SMS News on 18811, 17th June 2014). It means that sale of timber is not uncommon in the other areas of Sagaing but not in the study areas. The Chin respondents cut them mostly as workers under timber smugglers. Its result is deforestation, which as studies show, causes shortages. That starts the vicious circle of the tribal people changing their tradition of sustainable resource management and beginning to destroy forests and other natural resources for sheer survival. That depletes the resources further, poverty grows and competition begins for what is left of them. The resources that were their sustenance become only sources of income. Environmental degradation and lower land fertility follow from it. Greater poverty and more destructive dependence on the resources is its consequence (Roy 2005: 10-11). One sees it happening in the Chin Hills and it can happen among the Nagas too as the resources are being depleted.

Education and Health

Another casualty of a poor transport infrastructure and of low investment in the social sector is education and health care. Official data on education in Myanmar as a whole show that only 10 per cent of the children who enter the primary school reach class 10. In the rural areas the problem begins at the primary school level. Many villages have a primary school. Smaller ones have one primary school for 2 or 3 and the middle school is for 4 or 5 villages. Lack of transport makes it difficult for children to attend them particularly during the monsoons. That is where the dropout rate gets high. Moreover, because of low salaries teachers insist on their pupils taking tuition. It raises the cost which poor students cannot afford and more of them drop out (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma>, Accessed on 5 October 2013).

Most Chin and Naga villages areas have primary schools but very few students can attend middle or secondary school because of their distance. Chin families that can afford to send their children to India for education get them to cross the border “illegally”. During fieldwork the researchers met some children who had come home for holidays in late March. In Tamu one saw not a few children crossing over to Moreh everyday to attend a school there. They are

allowed to cross the border in the morning and return in the evening. Both the governments seem to support them. When the border was closed for some days in March 2014 after the murder of two Indians not far from Tamu, these children were allowed to cross the border to go to Moreh. A fairly big number of Nagas study in colleges in Manipur. One is told that the Government of India is aware of it and does not oppose it openly. Also the health services are conditioned by poor transport and environmental degradation. Traditionally forests provided the herbal medicines they required. Around two thirds of the respondents continue to depend on herbal medicines for health care. But with deforestation many herbs have disappeared but modern medicine is not accessible to them because of the distance of the health centres from the village, poor transport and their high cost. A few families complained of new diseases but many more spoke of higher incidence of malaria caused by environmental degradation and dysentery that is water borne. The health issue was not studied adequately.

3. Aspirations and Possible Follow Up

That brings one to the aspirations of the communities. To limit oneself to Myanmar, Sagaing had very few suggestions. Chin villagers had many, mainly in the form of alternatives to unemployment.

The Main Suggestions

Some suggestions are common to all the respondents but their nature differs from the Naga to the Chin. All the communities asked for good educational facilities but the Naga want better schools in their own townships. Some of them also wanted access to schools in India, particularly in Nagaland. Some Kuki and Thadou respondents suggested a hostel at Tamu where their children can stay and attend school at Moreh. The loudest voices were heard in the Chin State. Not a few village leaders said that English medium education is the only way of changing the status of their children. The difference with the Naga-Kuki-Thadou is that the Chin leaders want English medium schools in their villages. They have seen how a few children studying in India have developed themselves and want their own children to reach that stage.

The second common request was around transport but there was difference in its nature. A few middle class leaders in Tamu wanted India to build a North-South road connecting the Sittwe road with villages in Chin and Kachin States through Sagaing. They are a small minority mainly from the urban middle class. Most villagers want rural roads to be improved in the Naga areas of Sagaing. No road exists in the Chin State and they want new ones built. Village leaders of the Tedim and Falam tribes in particular repeated that, they need to connect villages in order to improve access to schools, to health care and to take their produce to the market. That request was linked to the need for electricity, irrigation and health facilities. Basic to these suggestions is employment generation, in order to reduce the Mizo-Chin tension which was mentioned both by the Mizos during the NEI part of the study (Fernandes, Das and Kashyap 2013: 45-46) and by the Chins during the Myanmar study. The Chin leaders kept saying that they have no choice but to migrate to Mizoram or to other countries because of the low productivity of their land, lack of other sources of income and high unemployment. Ways have to be found of creating employment in order to prevent such outmigration and reduce the tension that it causes.

The Kuki-Thadou respondents too spoke of some tension but it was linked to trade at the Moreh border and to the ethnic tension around it, not to the division of the tribe between the Tamu area and Manipur. They go in and out of Manipur regularly and depend on the Indian side for many of their supplies. Also the situation of the Tangkhul, Konyak and Thangsha Naga

is similar to that of the Kuki-Thadou. They depend on the Indian side of the border even for selling their produce. They felt that the relations with their counterparts on the other side were good. The only problem they faced was occasional harassment and bribe taking by the security forces guarding the border and they want it stopped.

Possible Responses

The suggestions for responses of the cross-border communities can be deducted from the above aspirations around transport, education, health care, irrigation and electricity. The first two are common to all but their nature differs between the Naga and the Chin. The suggestion of some leaders near Tamu on a North-South road linking the Sittwe-Mizoram road to the tribal regions up to the Thangsha area may not be viable economically and the Myanmar Government may not favour it. More realistic is the suggestion on roads linking villages, a need that most villagers felt. It cannot be taken in isolation but has to be part of an overall development strategy meant for peace building, reducing tensions and building friendship.

Similar differences exist in the suggestion for improving education. The Myanmar Government may not favour the suggestion on English medium schools in the State. But it may be feasible to have hostels on the border for their children to stay and go across to schools on the Indian side. It should probably be left to religious or civil society groups. On its part, according to some news items the Government of India has committed USD 25 million for building schools over five years. The news item leaves one with the impression that it is meant mainly for the Naga Townships. The combination of better transport between villages and better schools can perhaps be extended also to the Chin State.

Limiting the Field

To begin with, one can probably focus on the Chin State where the need is greater than in the Sagaing Region. The Chins seem to need better employment and income generation opportunities. The only resource the State has is its not too fertile land. For any improvement in their income, its agriculture has to be revived. At present the Chin depend on shifting cultivation that is not viable in its present form. Alternatives have to be found to it but it is not easy. Terrace cultivation practised by some Naga tribes depends on springs that are scarce in the Chin State. Rain water harvesting can be an alternative but their houses are built on stilts and new technology would have to be developed for that terrain. Despite small holdings, infertile soil and scarce water, a solution can be found only by improving their agriculture and commercialising its produce without intermediaries. Viable alternatives have to be found to the present form of *jhum* and ways have to be found of preserving water for irrigation.

They are technical solutions which cannot by themselves solve the problem. They have to be combined with community-based human resource development. To begin with the sale of their produce, most resources that can be sold are produced on a small scale by individual families. At present in the absence of a central market and because of poor transport they depend on some local or outside merchants who buy their produce at a very low price. Individuals cannot deal with the merchants. They have to be formed into cooperatives and they can learn much from the Mendipathar Multipurpose Cooperative Society on the Assam-Meghalaya (Garo Hills) border. Its experience shows that if they begin as a cooperative, its members look at only its economic benefits and do not grow as a community or work in cooperation. They tend to compete as individuals. That is why after 2 decades of existence and a decade of success as a cooperative, MPMCS took its members through the experience of self-help groups (SHG).

Employment and income generation is a real need in the Chin State and that can be done only when the people come together as a community and move towards cooperatives. SHGs have to be its first step, and that is where cooperation with India can be of much use. Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka in the South and some other States have a large number of SHGs. But all or most of them have been formed in a caste context while the communities of Myanmar, particularly the ethnic minorities, are casteless. For training, therefore, one may need to go back to the Northeast that has hundreds of SHGs of casteless tribal societies. Mizoram is the best base for training because the Chin and the Mizo belong to the same family. But their languages are different and very few Chins understand Mizo or even each other's language. However, there would be some Mizo speaking Chins since many of them have worked in Mizoram. They can be sent to Mizoram and the rest of the Northeast for training.

Cooperation between them is possible because around 90 per cent of the Mizo as well as Chin are Christians belonging to different denominations. In Mizoram the most important Church is Presbyterian but it also has a Catholic and a Baptist minority. A majority of the Chin are Baptists and there is a fairly strong Catholic Church among them. All the denominations have their development wings and it is possible for them to work together for a common cause. There are also some civil society groups both in Mizoram and in the Chin State. They maintain their autonomy and are not an integral part of any denomination but most of them work closely with one or the other Church. It is possible to involve them too. All the denominations and civil society groups have some persons capable of taking initiatives for the development of their people. A dialogue is required with all of them to plan the future.

The technical inputs have to be situated in the context of community building. Individual families cannot market the produce of their small kitchen gardens, or of some pigs or poultry birds. It has to be a cooperative effort of a community as a whole, not of individuals coming together for some economic benefits. Though their communities are breaking up they do have some community ethos. Cooperatives can be built on it. All the denominations together can choose a few leaders to visit Mizoram and some other areas of the Northeast like Mendipathar to understand them and negotiate the training programme. After it some persons chosen by the Churches can be sent to NEI for training in SHG and cooperative formation. When they come back they can get the process going.

Some can even be sent to the Angami area of Nagaland to study terrace cultivation and some Angami farmers can be brought to the Chin State to train the farmers. Terrace cultivation has to be adapted to the terrain of the Chin State but that is not easy. A few Chin families have attempted it with limited success both because it is very expensive and because of lack of irrigation facilities. Some can continue it but it may be more advisable to think in terms of optimising production in the *jhum* fields. Only around 10 per cent of the cultivators grow vegetables or potatoes as a second crop and that has to be increased to as close to 100 per cent as possible. The first crop is of paddy and corn mixed with some vegetables that grow in the *jhum* fields. Concentration can be on vegetables and potatoes as a second winter crop. The lower ranges can have vegetables and the higher ranges can grow potatoes.

That too needs water which is scarce in the State. Rain water harvesting seems to be the only alternative. Some people with technical knowledge need to work on a rain water harvesting system meant for the Chin terrain and houses built on stilts. Transport between villages can then be part of cooperative formation and employment generation. Agricultural revival requires environmental regeneration. Tree plantation, perhaps fruit trees, and soil regeneration have to be an integral part of agriculture and rain water harvesting. Different fruit trees would have to be identified for the lower and higher ranges and it requires persons with the knowledge of

agriculture and horticulture and others with technical knowledge of rain water harvesting and soil regeneration. Their support can come as part of a community process.

Environmental regeneration would include growing of medicinal herbs on which the people continue to depend. But they are disappearing. Solar lighting can be encouraged and community health worker training can be done through the SHGs. The people will also need training in numeracy in order to deal with the merchants. Experience in other places shows that marketing is the biggest source of exploitation and it is more in measures and weights than in other areas. For example, the farmers of the Ayeyarwady delta know pyi while the merchants measure their paddy in pounds. The people do not understand this exchange and the rate of interest (Htet, Pau and Saung 2014: 49-50). That requires training in counting, weighing and measuring, in other words, in numeracy. A community is central to it.

Conclusion

The effort in this paper has been to understand the relations between the divided tribes. Of the ten communities studied, the Chin need more follow up than the remaining groups. Suggestions have, therefore, been made for that State through community building and technical inputs, agricultural revival, marketing and environmental regeneration. It is civil society contribution to the Look East Policy.

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A critical Evaluation of India's Engagement with Myanmar

Professor Baladas Ghoshal

Director (Academics) Society for Indian Ocean Studies

India's Myanmar policy since 1988 could be divided into three phases- first, strongly critical of the junta regime; secondly, gradual move towards neutrality; and finally, increasing inclination towards the regime . When the democracy uprising of 1988 broke out in Myanmar its impact was immediately felt in India. Among the proximate neighbours of Myanmar, it was India alone that officially followed a clear-cut policy as regards supporting the democracy movement. Myanmar dissidents were given asylum as well as allowed to carry out activities for their cause. Repeated appeal to the ruling State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) for the release of Aung San Suu Kyi was also made from the Indian side. Around 1993 India began to reevaluate its strategy due to concerns that its policies had achieved little except to push Myanmar closer to Beijing. The army background of the then India's Ambassador to Myanmar, G. Parthasarathy, could have been also a contributory factor for an appreciation of Myanmar's generals. The result was a dramatic policy shift aimed at improving relations with Myanmar's generals, as it was also becoming clear that the pro-democracy movement would not achieve power within the foreseeable future.

The second phase started in mid- 90s, that saw a gradual policy shift in the attitude of the GOI towards the SLORC regime. Within the government, there was already strong protest from many of the military, intelligence, and foreign ministry officials against the policy of supporting the democracy movement and sidelining the junta regime at the cost of national interests. Shift in the stance of India became necessary with the changing strategic, economic and security concerns. The third phase began from 2000 when the NDA government under Atal Behari Vajpayee was in power and its foreign minister Jaswant Singh took important political, economic and strategic steps to strengthen India-Myanmar Relations.

Drivers of India's Recent Myanmar Policy

Myanmar is important in India's foreign for at least three, if not more, important reasons. First, it's strategic importance as a bridge between India and Southeast Asia. Myanmar is the only country in Southeast Asia that has land and maritime borders with Southeast Asia, an important route for trade and commerce, particularly with India's northeast states. The latest thrust in India's Look East Policy is to link India's Northeast with Southeast Asia to restore old historical relations between the two regions, and also build land connectivity between India and Thailand, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam through Myanmar for promotion of trade and commerce.

The second driver for change in India's Myanmar policy was the security in the Northeast, compelling India to openly support a policy of engagement with the military junta. When India kept a safe distance from Burma's military junta in the period between 1988 and 1992 for its lack of respect for democracy and its refusal to hand over power to National League for Democracy after its overwhelming victory at the polls in 1990, many of India's Northeast insurgency movements were taking that opportunity to build up their bases in Myanmar and carrying out their activities from those safe sanctuaries within Burma. As a result, it became extremely difficult for India's security apparatus to deal with these insurgencies as its supporters could take refuge in Burmese territory.

The third driver for change in India's policy is to counter China getting a strategic depth into Myanmar through its multifaceted moves to build strong relationship with the Burmese military regime. India perceived China's strategic moves into Myanmar as a threat to its security interests in the region. India, therefore, felt the need to build closer relations with the Burmese regime to neutralize the Chinese influence in Myanmar. This is mutually beneficial to both India and Myanmar, as the latter also found it convenient not to be too much dependent on China. Other ASEAN countries also do not like China to get too much of a strategic depth in Myanmar. That is why the need for India to neutralize China's influence in Myanmar. India's engagement of the Burmese military junta has helped ease the regime's international isolation and lessen Burma's reliance on China. Both nations sought to cooperate to counteract drug trafficking and insurgent groups operating in the border areas. India and Myanmar are leading members of BIMSTEC and the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation, along with Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, helping India develop its influence and ties amongst Southeast Asian nations.

Bangladesh's stubbornness in allowing access to transit routes for trade left India with Myanmar as the only alternative to connect the northeast to ASEAN markets and provide an economic incentive for the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) to lay down arms. India was also trying to deal with the insurgency by creating economic opportunities in the northeastern region, and Myanmar was crucial for this, too. While not being overly critical of the Burmese regime, India was able push through democratic reforms through its backroom diplomacy with important members of the government. While New Delhi also wanted to see a democratic government in Yangon, it believed this could be better done by engaging with the junta rather than cutting off ties with it. Moreover, India had its own important geopolitical reasons to develop ties with the military regime. During October 2004 visit of Senior General Than Shwe Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had raised the issue of democracy with the General "in a much more intense way than could be expressed in the media," despite the potential for a negative fallout on the bilateral relationship. New Delhi had battled for the inclusion of a paragraph in the joint statement that expressed India's support for "national reconciliation and an early transition to democracy in Myanmar," and described it as a "coup for India." Dr. Singh made the appeal on his return from the East Asia Summit in Kuala Lumpur in 2005, where he also said after a meeting with Myanmar Foreign Minister Soe Win that India "favors national reconciliation and the movement towards democracy, respect for fundamental human rights and allowing political activities to flourish."

External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee had sent a letter in 2007 to the junta's acting Prime Minister to give UN Special Envoy Ibrahim Gambari "maximum broad-based access" to leaders in Burmese society, reminding the regime that national reconciliation must be "broad-based." New Delhi was hesitant in reacting to the 2007 Burmese anti-government protests that had drawn overwhelming international condemnation. India also declared that it had no intention of interfering in Burma's internal affairs and that the Burmese people would have to achieve democracy by themselves as it respects the sovereignty of Myanmar. This low-key response has been widely criticized both within India and abroad as weakening India's credentials as a leading democratic nation, but looking at the result of Myanmar slowly ushering itself into the democratic path, India's nuanced approach, perhaps, most appropriate. Indo-Burma relations went into pleasant phase over Burmese steps towards democracy. When Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar in 2008, it was India's influence with the junta that the U.S. and other Western agencies fell back on in order to reach international aid to the country. It is now known that very little of that aid actually reached the victims of the cyclone.

Economic incentives

By the year 2000 India was the largest buyer of Burmese exports, purchasing around \$220 million USD worth of goods. Ties were further strengthened later that year with the formation of the Mekong-Ganga Cooperation. The next year, in 2001, the Indo-Myanmar Friendship Road was completed, marking a significant success in India's efforts to open up trade routes with South East Asia. This trend has continued throughout the past decade with the negotiation and agreement of further deals, though the amount of trade occurring between Burma and India is still far below its potential. During Than Shwe's visit to India in July 2010, the two nations resolved to increase trade by up to \$1 billion per annum. As well as the increased transportation and trade opportunities arising from a closer relationship with Burma, India also had a keen interest in securing access to Burma's abundance of natural resources to fuel its rapidly expanding and energy-hungry economy. The Burmese regime seemed equally eager to broker such deals as they offer huge profits, which were believed to finance the expansion of the military. However, the path to exploitation of Burma's natural resources had not always been smooth for India. Between 2004 and 2007, there were protracted negotiations for the construction of a pipeline to India to transport natural gas from the Shwe gas fields in Arakan State. Negotiations failed and the gas was piped to China. India is pursuing Burmese oil and gas reserves: in 2005 Essar Oil signed contracts with the military regime to make onshore and offshore explorations for oil and gas in Arakan State. Indian companies are also involved in hydropower projects, such as the Tamanthi Dam in Sagaing division, Burma.

The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transport Project will link India's landlocked northeast region by road and waterway, utilizing the Kaladan River which runs through Arakan State. The construction of port facilities and jetties at Sittwe, Paletwa and Kaletwa will be financed by the Indian government, with Essar Projects Ltd. while the highway linking Paletwa and Myeikwa on the India border is to be constructed by the Myanmar Ministry of Construction. Construction begins in November 2010 and is projected to be completed at some point between 2013 and 2015. The implementation of the project, in the eyes of the local people, is almost certain to be accompanied by numerous human rights violations in the form of land confiscation, forced labour, violence and militarization and informal taxes as well as environmental damage. Whether their perceptions are true or not, both the Indian government and the Essar Projects Ltd., the main contractor, must take their concerns into account and resolve the problems through dialogue and understanding. Otherwise, India may face the same problems as the Chinese. China's objectives in Burma/Myanmar were both economic and strategic and were achieved by building excellent infrastructures, roads. Railways and pipelines, to connect its land-locked state of Yunan to the Indian Ocean and investing in critical sectors in mining, electricity, Gems and precious stones. While China's strategies look attractive to emulate, Beijing also made mistakes by relying too heavily on the regime and not taking care of the interests of Myanmar. In the process it earned the hostility of the ordinary people of Myanmar that eventually led to the cancellation of the controversial Myitsone dam by the new government of the country under President Thein Sein that took office after the regime-sponsored elections in 2010.

India need not imitate or compete with the Chinese for influence, but should independently work its own strategies that will serve New Delhi political, economic, energy and strategic interests in Myanmar. India can learn from China's successes, particularly in infrastructure development and securing energy interests, but also must avoid the mistakes committed by the Chinese in antagonizing the local interests in its blatant pursuits of economic gains. New Delhi must take note of the concerns expressed by the local people on the Kaladan multi-modal project that links Sittwe port to Mizoram by road and an inland waterway, and try to enlist them as stake-holders in its completion. If the Sittwe port is not handled well, it will become

a huge cause of concern for us. Better engagement with civil society will also need to be part of our new initiatives. Indian businesses will need to become more agile to tap the opportunities available in Myanmar and compete with companies from China and other South- East Asian countries. For example, India lost to China an initial order of substantial Nano cars because of the lengthy 'bureaucratic' process of the Tata group. China was able to supply their Cherry cars quickly and now these cars run all over Yangon as Taxis and privately owned vehicles.

India was one of the major export markets for the pulses and beans produced in Myanmar. However, the export of pulses and beans to India has decreased in recent years. There is a need for co-operation to shore up the exports of pulses and beans to previous levels. Despite being neighbors and sharing a common border, Myanmar and India have not been able to make optimal use of border trade. Even while the bilateral trade stood at 1.28 billion U.S. dollars, the border trade was just about 13 million U.S. dollars. Border trade volume is just a little over one percent of total trade. New Delhi will have to seek ways and means to co-operate for the promotion of border trade. India has established itself as Naypyidaw's fourth largest trading partner and a major investor in infrastructure and oil sectors. However, the lack of realization of the full potential in enhancing India-Myanmar economic cooperation is likely to hurt Indian interests at a time when Myanmar is taking baby steps in globalizing its economy, and other countries are eager to avail the opportunity of establishing greater foothold in that country. India is eyeing a substantial increase in trade with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries by 2015, and for that to happen enhancing economic cooperation with Myanmar is important as Myanmar is India's only land-bridge to South East Asia. With Myanmar already having taken over the chair of ASEAN, India is eyeing a window of opportunity to increase trade with Myanmar and ASEAN countries. India-ASEAN trade stood at \$ 70 billion in 2012 and is expected to rise to \$ 100 billion by 2015. And Myanmar would be crucial in determining New Delhi's efforts to cooperate with the ASEAN. The India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in goods has been able to record 30 percent growth in India-ASEAN trade which crossed US \$ 50 billion mark in 2010-11 and \$ 70 billion by 2012. The FTA is set to abolish tariff restrictions on 3,200 items by December, 2013 and thus promises to throw open enormous economic opportunities to India, particularly to India's North-East and Eastern states.

It is true that India-Myanmar trade has come a long way from the 1980s when it was \$12.4 million in 1980-81 to \$1070.88 million in 2010-11. Indian oil and gas companies have invested in sourcing gas from blocks in Myanmar and India has also discussed apparel, refineries and information technology sectors. Myanmar expects India to invest in telecommunications and software and services sector. Anand Sharma, India's minister for commerce, industry and textiles, during his visit to Naypyidaw to attend the East Asian Forum in June, 2013 revived discussions on the gas pipeline connection between India and Myanmar through Bangladesh. Sharma is said to have explored the possibility of the two blocks awarded to Indian company ESSAR Ltd as a source for the pipeline to India. In 2012, Myanmar and India had signed 12 MoU agreements on infrastructural projects and tapping of natural resources. India has also promised a \$ 550 million as line of credit to Myanmar for the development of railways, transport, power transmission lines and oil refineries. The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Project once completed is expected to transform trade and commerce in the Rakhine and Chin states as well as the north-eastern states of India. The 3,200 km Trilateral Highway Project connecting Moreh in Manipur to Mae Sot in Thailand via Myanmar is expected to be completed by 2016.

Border Trade

Border trade is the most important when it comes to India's trade with Myanmar. India shares a 1,600 kilometers long border with Myanmar especially through the Northern Eastern states

of Manipur and Mizoram and the total border trade stood at around \$ 13.73 billion in 2009-10. While Myanmar recorded a 58 percent hike in its border trade in 2011-12, amounting to \$ 3.367 billion, India-Myanmar trade amounted to about \$15.049 million only in the same period, reflecting the scope for more engagement in the area. Myanmar, in the recent past, has also opened two border trade-points with India - Tamu and Reedkhawdhar in the Sagaing region and Chin state of Myanmar respectively. A third border trade point is proposed to be opened at Avakhung- Pansat/ Somrai. With the road being cleared for trade between India and Myanmar via the Pangsau Pass on the Arunachal Pradesh border, the historic Stilwell Road is likely to come alive with commercial activities. In 2012, Indian trade with Myanmar stood at US\$1.87 billion, far short of the US\$ 5 billion between China and Myanmar. Commercially, a two-way trade target of US\$3 billion by 2015 does not look very ambitious, but even this may not be reached. In contrast with the rich base for growth provided by Myanmar's rapidly developing Chinese neighbouring province of Yunnan, the states on both sides of the Myanmar-India border are among the poorest in each country. So Myanmar-India border trade cannot be expected to be a foundation for large growth in bilateral trade and investment. Moreover, the trade routes to the more dynamic domestic markets in both countries are longer and much less developed along the India-Myanmar border, making other markets more attractive.

India's public sector investments in infrastructure and oil in Myanmar are not enough and the private sector has to come forward to advance economic cooperation between the two countries. Indian private sector would also not have an easy go as they would have to compete with private players from across the world to make inroads into Myanmar. Having said this, it is still India's moment to take the initiative in escalating economic ties between the two nations. Either, New Delhi strikes when the iron is hot or wait to be relegated as a mere spectator watch European Union, Japan and U.S. steal the show. Although Manmohan Singh's visit was the first prime ministerial visit since that of Rajiv Gandhi in 1987, the visit followed the pattern of other more frequent high-level Indian visitors to Myanmar in recent years. An impressive twelve bilateral agreements across a wide range of practical activities were signed during Manmohan Singh's visit, with an appropriate emphasis on 'connectivity' (for example, establishing a cross-border bus service for the first time). An agreement on a significant commercial credit of US\$500 was also concluded, but otherwise the agreements were unremarkable. Even if India's trade with Myanmar reaches \$3 billion in 2014-15, the trade would still be half of what China's trade with Myanmar is today. More so, the trade balance is in favour of Myanmar with India bearing a trade deficit for all these years starting 2006-07 and in 2010-11 incurring a highest deficit of \$ 681.38 million. Also, with increased engagements of Japan and the West with Myanmar, the fears of crowding out New Delhi are real. However, it needs to be seen how well Myanmar takes the shocks of shrinking Chinese investment which according to a U.S. based think-tank study indicated at drastically reducing from \$ 12 billion from 2008 to 2011 to \$ 407 million in financial year 2012-13. There are also reports of Beijing's attempts to make inroads in influencing leaders of Myanmar's opposition party, Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) whose candidate is said to be the front-runner in the 2015 presidential elections. Hence, there are fears that Myanmar is observing caution when it comes to upsetting, China. While China enjoys a growing dominance in Myanmar's economy, some astute thinking by India could make it a serious competitor. To do that, though, New Delhi needs to be more assertive and aggressive in projecting its own strengths. It should make special efforts to highlight its shared history and institutional advantages, and its belief in partnership rather than creating appendages. This is important, because the ever-increasing Chinese economic presence is slowly but surely causing resentment amongst sections of the Myanmar populace.

Role of Northeast in India-Myanmar Relations:

India expects that its North East develops as a consequence to the connectivity with its South-eastern neighbours, including Myanmar. However, border trade where the two countries can instantly cooperate still remains an area of concern. There is a dire need to resolve the issues on logistics and implementation. India is yet to open the historic Stillwell Road. The ambitious Kaladan Multi-modal Project is also moving slowly due to the unavailability of funding for infrastructural upgrade in India's North East. Northeast India should have been factored in our relations with Burma from the time of our independence. Active cooperation between India and Burma on internal security of both the countries would have helped both the governments to tackle their respective ethnic insurgencies. It would have also promoted development of infrastructures, investments in industries, create jobs and economic upliftment in the region. Northeastern part of India is our bridge with Southeast Asia and should form the main plank in our Look East Policy. In fact, Mani Shankar Aiyar, the former minister -in-charge of the region, was right when he said that Southeast Asia begin in North East India, not just in terms of geography but also in terms of ethnicity and culture. The realization that the success of our policy toward Burma/Myanmar, and as a corollary to our Look East Policy is intrinsically linked to Northeast India came quite late (as late as 2006 when for the first time Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee travelled to Shillong on a public diplomacy campaign for integration NEI with LEP), and at a high cost. While the idea of the inclusion of the "northeast development concern" as an important component of this policy came up in 1997 following a report - Transforming the North-East: High Level Commission Report to the Prime Minister, 7 March, 1997, it is only recently that New Delhi has been talking of Northeast's integration with our Look East Policy by dovetailing its policy with the development of infrastructure, connectivity and tourism in the Northeastern states that act as a bridge between India and Southeast Asia.

Evaluation of India-Myanmar relations

Without Bangladesh's help and support, we cannot access our north-eastern region. Bangladesh is central to the success of our Look-East policy. BIMSTEC, with Bangladesh in it, is the bridge between South Asia and South-east Asia. India will have to move ahead with its Look-East policy but for its success, it needs total support from Bangladesh. Bangladesh could also use India's northeast to develop its own links with south-east Asia. Bangladesh appeared more comfortable dealing with India in a regional group rather than bilaterally. While India was mainly focused on bilateral component of connectivity, Bangladesh repeatedly highlighted the value of sub-regional arrangement within this process. In this regard, Bangladesh expressed its interest to seek and expand transit facility for Nepal and Bhutan through India. Connectivity between India's Northeast and Southeast Asia through Burma will not only promote trade and commerce and as a consequence economic development of the Northeast leading to an induction or integration of the region into the mainstream of India's development process, but will also free them from the sense of periphery and in the process will promote the development of a political and economic stake in the peace and stability of the region, leading further to their integration with the Indian nation. Better roads will promote trade, tourism and economic development. The increased tourism in turn will create more jobs and help in the drive to reduce poverty in the region through rural connectivity and accessibility. Karl Deutsch's assumption on the link between growing volumes of transaction and increasing prospects for peace impacting on sub-regional securities is relevant here.

Integration with Southeast the region will bear fruit and better results if it is carried more through people to people contacts or civil society interactions, which we have not explored as yet to its fullest potentials. Regional integration, an important objective of India's Look East

Policy, can never be successful through inter-governmental relations alone, but also interactions at the level of business and civil society of which people to people contact is an important component. The economic and natural factor endowments need to be supported by favourable government policies in order to start and successfully develop an economic cooperation scheme. The dividend is viewing citizenship and nationhood beyond borders as part of extended neighbourhood and greater integration with Southeast Asia, a major goal of India's Look East Policy. The progress of the Look East policy would be dictated, among many factors, by India's ability to integrate the interests of the North-eastern states in its larger regional ambition.

New Delhi's interest in integrating India's isolated northeast with the rest of the country will continue to provide Indian officials with an incentive to deepen economic, political and military ties with Myanmar. Yet security dilemmas on both sides of the border constitute major concerns for Indian authorities. For example, the Buddhist-orchestrated pogroms against Myanmar's Muslims have led to a radicalization of some Muslims in the region, which threatens to result in retaliatory attacks against Buddhist institutions in India and other corners of South and Southeast Asia. Cross-border security issues have occasionally been a subject of mutual concern, and have an unsettling effect for both countries. India has been worried about the efficacy of Myanmar's efforts to contain separatist elements inside Myanmar territory. Myanmar has been anxious not to encourage its Naga minority to pursue ideas of a greater Nagaland incorporating Naga groups from both countries and straddling the border. However, these concerns could also fade if the grounds for minority dissatisfaction decline as positive political change take root in Myanmar. From Naypyidaw's perspective, deeper ties with India can alleviate some of its own concerns about destabilizing developments on its side of the border, while also demonstrating that the country can balance its partnership with China along with other regional actors. Given Myanmar's economic and political dependence on Beijing, it should be expected that the government in Naypyidaw will only do so much, and with caution. Even if Myanmar's relationship with China does not fundamentally shift (and we do not expect that it will), India-and other countries such as the United States and Japan-offer Naypyidaw greater leverage against Beijing by emphasizing that Myanmar has other options. Chinese officials view the gradual development of economic, political and military relationships with India as a threat to Beijing's unique relationship with the country.

Myanmar has had mixed views about its shared colonial relationship with India and the numbers of Indian workers who were brought to Myanmar under British rule and stayed. It still looks to India for certain support, including commercial support and (somewhat crudely) as a balance to China's growing stake in Myanmar. Overall, however, India makes a less-attractive market for Myanmar's business community, which sees China, Southeast Asia and Japan and Korea as preferred opportunities. Defence ties are also under-developed, constrained initially by India's anti-Myanmar military policies but also because they have not been prized by the Myanmar armed forces. Generally, Burmese tend to look down on Indians living in Myanmar, who continue to be the object of quite direct discrimination. As a result, consciously or not, Myanmar has consistently attached lower priority to its ties with India. In India, previous rationales given for developing relations with Myanmar tended to see these relations as a tool to achieve some other Indian policy objective, rather than a worthwhile goal in itself. Thus, Myanmar was the window for India's 'Look East' Policy towards Southeast Asia after 1991, and later, competition with China was cited as a reason for strengthening India's ties with Myanmar. Not surprisingly this gave the impression that India's priorities lay elsewhere, and that, fundamentally, India was 'wary' of investing a major effort into its relations with Myanmar. Some Indian observers also acknowledge that India's past performance in pursuing commercial

opportunities in Myanmar was lackluster. Earlier attempts to spark a take-off in bilateral economic ties seemed to peter out. The only completed infrastructure project is the cross-border Moreh-Kalewa Road into Chin State on Myanmar's western border. Finished in 2001, this road is useful in itself, but is a mere 160 kilometres in length. More ambitious projects, such as the Kaladan multi-modal highway, and the Sittwe port development to improve land/water communication links, remain unfinished.

Looking into the Future

India views Myanmar's emerging political transformation as a strategic and ideological opening that offers New Delhi an opportunity to dilute Chinese influence while expanding India's strategic depth. While India cannot expect to rival China's influence in Myanmar in the near or even medium term, it can have an impact on that relationship. In turn, Myanmar stands to gain from a stronger relationship with India on a variety of levels, whereas China views the strengthening relationship between India and Myanmar as a strategic threat. India's lack of capacity to become an influential trade and investment partner is driven by several factors, which include India's underdeveloped energy infrastructure, which limits New Delhi's capacity to transfer and distribute Myanmar's oil and natural gas in India, the reality that the two countries' mutual border is undeveloped, which contrasts with Myanmar's border with China, and bureaucratic hurdles and red tape that impede the cross-border trade and investment process.

Myanmar's government understands the value it provides to both India and China. India's security dilemmas and its interest in new sources of oil and natural gas will continue to drive its ambitions vis-à-vis Myanmar for the foreseeable future. At the same time, China's access to the Bay of Bengal via Myanmar, and the security of energy accessibility via its landlocked southern provinces, make Myanmar an important strategic partner for Beijing. Within this context, deepening ties between India and Myanmar will remain an issue for China. Regardless of whether Myanmar completes its democratic transition or retreats to resume its previous pariah status, its geostrategic significance and natural resources will continue to shape the balance of power in a region where Chinese and Indian interests intersect. China and India can indeed coexist in Myanmar, but China will maintain a distinct advantage by virtue of its recent history, the nature of its military assistance, and its alignment of long term interests with Naypyidaw.

Even today, as it takes on the challenges of political reform and institution building, there is much Myanmar can learn from India. In that regard, it is worth noting that New Delhi has begun to assist Myanmar in a number of important spheres, including agriculture, information technology and engineering. Most recently, INDEE 2014, a flagship engineering exhibition of India's Engineering Export Promotion Council, was being held in Yangon with Indian embassy support. India needs to send a clear message that it believes in providing assistance in sectors where local capabilities can be built, rather than just milking resources to bolster its own economy. Another area is press freedom. There has been mushrooming of electronic media channels and newspapers in Myanmar, although skeptics see the reforms as mere window dressing. India has a vibrant media, and could offer a useful example to Myanmar in this regard. India's admittedly imperfect yet reasonable robust experiment with a pluralist society could also provide lessons in religious tolerance, at a time when clashes between Rohingya Muslims and Buddhists pose a serious challenge to Myanmar. China's handling of its problems with the Uighurs in Xinjiang would suggest it is a less useful model for a country attempting the transition from authoritarianism to an open society.

India's Development Cooperation Projects in Myanmar

Mr C S Kuppuswamy

Consultant with the South Asia Analysis Group

Introduction

Since the quasi-civil government came to power in Myanmar in March 2011, India has made concerted efforts to improve its stakes in that country which is strategically and economically important to India in general and to the North Eastern States in particular.

The Development Cooperation Projects (the terminology used by the MEA) undertaken by the Government of India in Myanmar are:

- Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project
- Tri-lateral Highway Project
- Rhi-Tiddim Project
- Tamu-Kalewa-Kalay Road
- Information Technology Projects
- Advance Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE), Yezin Rice Bio Park, Yezin
- Upgradation of Yangon Children Hospital and Sittwe General Hospital
- Industrial Training Centre, Pakokku and Myingyan
- Restoration of Ananda Temple, Bagan
- Three Power Transmission Lines Project
- Telecom Project
- Special Economic Zone

Of these, the Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project and the Tri-lateral Highway Project connecting India, Myanmar and Thailand can be considered as the mega (or major projects). These two projects are being discussed in greater detail.

Kaladan Project

“Travel from Aizawl (Mizoram) to the nearest Indian port of Kolkata via the congested, 11 kilometre-wide Siliguri corridor, also known as the “Chicken’s Neck,” is a 1,547 kilometre-long journey. Prices for basic staples like rice, sugar, tea and tomatoes can cost as much as three times more in Mizoram and other northeastern states compared with most Indian cities or neighbouring countries like Bangladesh”. This problem will be alleviated on completion of the Kaladan Project.

The project has been named after the Kaladan river which is the longest and most used river, connecting Rakhine and Chin States. Approximately 350 km (220 miles) in length, it runs from its source in Mizoram, India, cutting a narrow valley through the mountains of Chin State, descending to cross the fertile plains of Rakhine State, and finally emptying into the Bay of Bengal at Sittwe, Rakhine’s capital.

The Kaladan Multi-modal Transit Transport Project aims to connect the Bay of Bengal (Kolkata Port) to Mizoram through Myanmar hinterland (Arakan and Chin States) using sea, river and road transport modes. Movement of goods from Indian mainland to the North-East Segment of India through Myanmar would be from Sittwe to Paletwa (158 km) via the Kaladan

river and from Paletwa to the Indian border via road (129 km). The project totally financed by Government of India and estimated to cost US\$ 214 Million is expected to be fully operational by 2016.



Source: www.arakanrivers.net

Stretch	Distances	
	Mode	Distance (in km)
Kolkata - Sittwe	Sea	539
Sittwe – Paletwa	Inland Water Transport (Kaladan)	158
Paletwa – Kaletwa	Road (Myanmar)	67
Kaletwa – Myeikwa	Road (Myanmar)	62
Myeikwa – Lawngtlai	Road (India)	100
Lawngtlai – Aizawl	Road (NH 54)	334



Source: Kaladan Movement Report – “One cannot step into the same river twice”

Project Details

Conceived	In 2003 after preliminary feasibility studies by the Rail India Technical and Economic Services (RITES)
Agreement	Framework Agreement signed with the Myanmar Government on April 2, 2008.
Estimated date of Completion	Waterway segment by March 2015 Complete project by 2016
Cost	US\$ 214 million.
Funding	Piloted and funded by the Govt of India
Phases	I – Construction of Jetties and Ports II – Dredging of Kaladan river, Construction of Port in Paletwa and Cargo transferring centre to be arranged III & IV- Building Myanmar-India Highways
Agencies Involved	Inland Waterways Authority of India Essar Projects limited, Mumbai

Rail India Technical and Economical Services (RITES)
Myanmar Ministry of Transport
Ministry for Development of North Eastern Region (MODNER)
Mizoram State PWD
Local contractors (Ram Dayal Sharma and ARSS- Atlanta)

More on the Kaladan Project

Inland Waterways Authority of India is the Project Development consultant for the port and in land waterway transport component.

M/s Essar Projects India Ltd (SPIL) is the contractor for development of the port at Sittwe, dredging of the sea, dredging of waterway (158 km), development of IWT at Paletwa and Construction of six 300 T General Cargo Vessels to be handed over to Myanmar.

The Myanmar Ministry of Construction is responsible for the construction of 130km two lane highway from Paletwa town to the Myanmar-India border (Myeikwa/Lomasu).

The Ministry of DoNER, the Mizoram State PWD and local contractors Ram Dayal Sharma and ARSS – Atlanta will be the implementing agencies for the Construction of the 100 km two-lane Highways in Mizoram State from Lomasu to Lawngtalai (where it will connect with NH 54) and for construction of a Land Customs Station at Zorinputi in Mizoram State.

The main motivation behind the Kaladan project is the economic development of the land locked NE States of India. On completion of the project there will be sizeable increase in intra-India trade as well as increase in trade with Burma and the rest of ASEAN.

There is a people's movement called the "Kaladan Movement" which has brought out a detailed report on the benefits that will accrue to the locals as well as the negative impacts to be experienced by the local communities such as forced labour, confiscation of land, forced eviction etc. The report has also listed a number of recommendations to the Government of India as well as to the Government of Myanmar.

Current Status

- a) Jetty work at Sittwe is expected to be completed shortly while dredging work at Sittwe has been completed except for a small area left due to old wreckages. Reclamation work for backup facilities and rubble dyke at Sittwe are also nearing completion;
- b) Work on IWT jetties at Paltewa is underway. Waterway component of the project is scheduled to be completed by June 2015. Work on cargo vessels has commenced at Yangon. Expected to be completed by October 2014;
- c) Efforts to hire a survey and salvage operator are in progress for two wrecks found in Kaladan River at Sittwe;
- d) DPR for road component has been finalized and communicated to GoM which has given approval to it along with approval for Paletwa to Kaletwa section to be done by Myanmar Company and from Kaletwa to India Border to be done by Indian Company. The proposal under approval of the Government of India, after which the implementation process would start;

Trilateral Highway Project

The Trilateral Highway Project involves developing a 1360 km highway jointly by India, Myanmar and Thailand connecting Moreh in India-Tamu-Kalewa-Yargyi-Monywa-Mandalay – Meiktila-Baw Nat Gyi-Mawlamyine-Kawkaeik – Myawaddy – MaeSot (Thailand). India is responsible for the Tamu-Yargi section of the Highway. The alignment of this highway falls within the Asian highways 1 and 2 being pursued by UNESCAP.



Source: The Tribune

Project Details

India-Myanmar –Thailand Highway

- Development of 78km of new roads
- Upgradation of about 400 km of roads
- Construction of all-weather approach lanes,
- Rehabilitation/ reconstruction of weak or distressed bridges
- A detailed examination of a project on the Ayeyarwaddy river as well as a causeway.
- Phase-I of the IMTTA was taken up in early 2005.
- India assumes responsibility of 78 km of missing links and 58 km of upgradation as part of Phase-I.
- India may also take up additional 132 km of upgradation.
- Thailand would take up upgradation of 136km and 62 km sectors of Phase-I and another 100 km as part of Phase – II.
- Border Roads Organisation (BRO) upgraded the Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo (TKK) road (160 km) in Myanmar at a cost of about US \$ 27.28 million, Government of India is also responsible for upkeep of the TKK road.

The idea of the Trilateral Highway was conceived at the Trilateral Ministerial meeting on Transport Linkages in Yangon in April 2002.

The last meeting of the India-Myanmar-Thailand Joint Task Force on the Trilateral Highway Project was held at New Delhi on 10-11 September 2012 when the three sides agreed to establish trilateral connectivity by 2016.

According to a PTI report of February 14, the then Minister of State for Road, Transport & Highways Mr. Sathyanaryana told the Rajya Sabha in a written reply that “Presently, projects are at feasibility-report stage, India agreed to undertake upgradation of the Kalewa-Yagyi section of trilateral highway and construction of 71 bridges in the Tamu-Kalewa section.

There is also a proposal by the ASEAN Land Transport working group for extending this highway to Laos and Cambodia.

Linking of this highway with the Mekong-India Economic corridor and the BCIM corridor will enhance the ASEAN-INDIA connectivity to a great extent.

Status

After a field inspection visit by the potential bidders in October 2013, M/s EGIS India Consulting Engineers Private Limited has been awarded the contract to prepare feasibility report for the project. Feasibility report to be completed in one year. Work is expected to commence in the next working season.

Rhi-Tiddim Project

The project involves development of a road in Myanmar along the Indo-Myanmar border of Rhi-Tiddim (80.1 km). The MoU for construction of Rhi-Tiddim was signed in December 2012 during External Affairs Minister (India) visit to Myanmar.

The project undertaken by IRCON is expected to cost US \$ 60 million and is expected to be completed by 2014. This will help bolster trade at Rhi-Zowkhatahar border trading point on the Mizoram border.

Status

A proposal visit by bidders took place in February 2014. Preparation of Detailed Project Report is underway.

Tamu-Kalewa-Kalay Road (TKK)-(INDIA-MYANMAR FRIENDSHIP ROAD)

The project involves upgradation of the 160 km TKK road. Border Roads Organization (BRO) is the implementing and maintaining agency for 6 years. BRO had completed the resurfacing and maintenance work of Tamu-Kyigone-Kalemyo and handed it over to the Myanmar Authorities. During the Indian PM's visit to Myanmar in May 2012, India has agreed to build/upgrade the 71 bridges on the friendship road.

Status

Pre-feasibility study tour by bidders took place in November 2013. M/s Ircon Infrastructure and Services Ltd., in joint venture with Shwete Technophile Consultants Private Ltd. has been awarded the contract for consultancy services for preparation of feasibility report for construction of 71 bridges including approach routes in the TKK road section project on 05 February 2014. Survey work is in progress.

Stillwell Road

India has still not decided to reopen the World War II vintage Stillwell Road purely on security grounds. However, pressure is mounting on the government especially after BJP has taken over the reins. The Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister has urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to revive the Stillwell Road and open Indo-Bhutan Trade through Tawang (Asian Age 29 June, 2014).

The 1726 km Stillwell Road links Ledo in Assam with Kunming in China through the Pangsau Pass on the Arunachal Pradesh-Myanmar border (The road passes through India for only 61 km (34 km in Arunachal and 27 in Assam), 1033 km in Myanmar and 632 in China). The 312 km stretch from Myitkyina in Kachin State to Pangsau Pass needs to be rebuilt or renovated. China has developed its part of the road and is helping Myanmar to build its part as well.

Information Technology Projects

With the aim to develop an IIT in Myanmar on the lines of IITs of India, the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology (MIIT) is being setup at Mandalay. As per the MoU signed, India is to establish and run the MIIT for 5 years while Myanmar would provide for infrastructure.

The International Institute of Information Technology, Bangalore (IIT-B) India is the mentor institution which is providing technical and academic support to the project. A Ground Breaking Ceremony, signaling the auspicious beginning to the establishment of the campus was held on 17 June, 2014 at Mandalay, Ambassador Mukopadhyaya said at this ceremony that India's continued commitment to development cooperation in Myanmar includes a financial commitment of US \$ 24 million for IT projects.

A 9 month Post Graduate Diploma in Software development (PGDSD) course has commenced at IIIT Bangalore from 05 May 2014. 30 Participants selected from Myanmar are attending this course.

India is providing IT training to 100 young Myanmar Entrepreneurs at the Infosys Global Education Centre Mysore since February 2014. The 12 week training programme is co-sponsored by the Infosys, UNESCAP and the Government of India.

A MoU was signed on 31 October, 2013 between Myanmar and India for strengthening “India-Myanmar for Enhancement of IT skills” at Yangon through GOI financial support of Rs. 17.89 Million. The project is being implemented through CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing).

Tamanthi & Shwezaye Hydro Electric Projects

A media report (Pioneer of 28 January 2014) indicates that these two projects (1200 MW Tamathi and 880 MW Project in Shwezaye) in the Chindwin River basin are being scrapped after the State owned National Hydel Power Corporation (NHPC) has termed them not viable citing environmental concerns and tariff issues.

Advance Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE), Yezin

ACARE is to be set up at Yezin University Campus Nay Pyi Taw. ACARE would breed high yield crops, facilitate access to technology and promote capacity building, and help in participatory knowledge management to improve the agriculture sector of Myanmar. Indian Agriculture Research Institute (IARI) is the nodal agency from Indian side responsible for training, monitoring, curriculum and setting up of laboratories and providing full time on site advice. Yezin Agricultural University is the designated nodal agency from Myanmar side.

Status

Government of Myanmar has completed the construction of ACARE including the three storey building, the two storey lab along with fencing and road paving. The equipment for ACARE would be procured and supplied shortly and a Resident Advisor would be deputed at ACARE as agreed by the two Governments.

Rice Bio Park, Yezin

The project aims to serve as training cum Demonstration Park for conversion of rice biomass into market driven products, helping in job creation and income generation. It involves setting up small scale units along with storage facility, residential area, administrative building and knowledge centre. MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) is the consultant cum project manager responsible for business plan, equipments and training. Yezin Agriculture University is to be the nodal agency from Myanmar side.

Status

Civil work for the Rice Bio Park which includes 13 different buildings, is in full swing. Procurement of equipment is underway and would reach on site by August 2014.

Upgradation of Yangon Children Hospital and Sittwe General Hospital

The project is for the upgradation, provision of medical equipment and training with respect to the two hospitals at Yangon and Sittwe. The nodal agency for Myanmar is the Ministry of Health. Hospital Service Consultancy Corporation India Ltd (HSCC) is the project management consultant.

Status

- a) Training of paramedic staff for hospitals has been completed.
- b) GoM has undertaken civil works which are nearly completion, especially Yangon Children's Hospital which is ready to receive equipment;

- c) The first batch of equipments viz Oxygen concentrator and fittings have been shipped in three consignments. While first batch has been cleared and installed, the second and third batches are in the process of clearance from Ministry of Health Myanmar.
- d) Time line of further equipment to be dispatched and installed, including CT Scan machines, has been chalked out.

Industrial Training Centre, Pakokku & Industrial Training Centre, Myingyan The project has two components:

ITC Pakokku which was entirely funded by Government of India. HMTI is project executor. HMTI completed the project on schedule and Centre has been handed over to Myanmar Government on March 30, 2010. Courses commenced from July 2010. 209 persons have been trained at the Centre so far.

ITC Myingyan for which a MoU was signed on June 21, 2011. The GoI to provide for all costs for project planning and coordination; supply installation and commissioning of equipment, machinery. It also involves training of Myanmar personnel in India and on job training in Myanmar by Indian experts. 21 Myanmar personnel nominated by M/Industry got training in India during January to July 2012 organized by HMTI.

Status

- a) Myanmar personnel nominated by Ministry of Industry got training in India from January to July 2012 organised by HMTI for a total of 108 man months.
- b) 15 Experts from India are being deputed for a period of 132 man months for conducting on the job training to IMITC instructors.
- c) ITC Myingyan handed over to Ministry of Industries, Myanmar in a ceremony on 15 October 2013.

Restoration of Ananda temple, Bagan

India has undertaken the project to restore the historic Ananda temple in Bagan, through the assistance of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) in coordination with the Ministry of Culture of Myanmar. A six member team from ASI was in Bagan for the conservation work from October 2013 to May 2014. Next phase would commence after the monsoon season.

Three Power Transmission Lines Project

A LOC for 3 power transmission lines to be executed by Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd (PGCIL) was signed in June 2008 along with change in scope of work approved for the project in March 2012. The transmission lines and substations proposed are: a) Oakshitpin – Taungup 230 KV, b) Taungup – Maei-Ann-Mann 230 KV c) Maei-Kyaukphyu 230 KV. MoEP and PGCIL signed the contract on March 21, 2012. An amendatory LOC agreement between EXIM Bank and MFTB has been signed on 02nd July 2012.

Telecom Project

GoI had agreed to upgrade the microwave link between Moreh to Mandalay under a line of credit from India. The project for a new Optical fibre line between Monywa to Rhi-Zawkhathar also agreed to be undertaken with Indian assistance. The project is now operational. BSNL has been asked to look into commercial propositions such as internet bandwidth and hubbing. In June 2012, Govt of Myanmar has revised their request and have sought assistance for the following two projects: i. Rih – Mintup microwave link ii. Rural area GSM/UMTS mobile network.

Special Economic Zone

India has offered a US \$150 million package towards the establishment of a Special Economic Zone in Sittwe, the Capital of strife torn Rakhine State. It will be linked to Kolkata via sea.

Conclusion

There is a strong bias on infrastructure and information technology in India's Development Projects in Myanmar.

Even though India is expanding its economic footprints in Myanmar rapidly, it is no match to China's standing in Myanmar. China's twin oil and gas pipelines running across the country from Kyauk Phyu (on the Bay of Bengal) to Kunming is a mammoth project. India's projects stand no comparison to such projects.

India has also been found wanting in completing the projects in time resulting in undue delay and escalation in costs.

There is lack of awareness about Myanmar in the Indian Industry. Consequent to the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to Myanmar (in May, 2012) and the then Commerce & Industry Minister Anand Sharma to Myanmar (in June, 2013) to attend the World Economic Forum, things are improving.

With abundance of natural gas in Myanmar, India may have to rethink on a pipeline either through Bangladesh or through the sea or through the North Eastern States to meet its energy needs for the future.

New Geopolitics and Paradigm Change

Salai Isaac Khen

Founder and Executive Director of the Gender and Development Initiative-Myanmar

In recent years, the ‘rise of China’ has become a frequently evoked term of reference, as has the ‘rise of India’. By saying this, something of a ‘Great Game’ seems at play between these two rising powers. The ‘Great Game’ was originally coined in the nineteenth century to describe the geopolitical rivalry between the Russian and British Empires; a ‘New Great Game’ has been often associated with current Central Asia— i.e., between China and India. According to David Scott, three fields are involved in the discourse of this New Great Game: military-security, economic and diplomatic.

In the context of the New Great Game, where is Myanmar? According to Dr. Thant Myint U, Myanmar is where China meets India. Literally, ‘where China meets India’ can be understood that China initiates. It doesn’t mean that India doesn’t have a role in Myanmar geopolitically, however, in current reality China plays a much significant role in Myanmar and Myanmar is quite difficult to escape from China’s big brother policy. In terms of economic investment, India is much behind than China. According to Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), as of February 28, 2013, China is the top rank of the investing countries (33.7%), Thailand is the second (22.7%), and India is the tenth (0.7%).

With the rise of recent political reforms, Myanmar is facing some challenges created by the neighboring giants. China’s response to their energy security need pushes Myanmar to allow building oil and gas pipeline from Kyauk Phyu (a sea port on the bank of Bay of Bengal) to Kunming. It is an uncertainty how India’s plan for connectivity to South East Asia through a highway road from North East India to Thailand will bring benefits to local residents along the highway road. People in Myanmar have experiences and memoirs of pains and bitterness when it comes to foreign investments such as Myitsone dam, Letpadaung copper mines, Salween river dams, Thilawah SEZ project, Dawei Deep Sea Port project, Shwe gas project, etc. Thus, Myanmar is sometimes like walking on the fence of opportunity and vulnerability.

It is gradually evident that conflict in Rakhine state is becoming an emerging geopolitical issue. The conflict between Rakhine and Muslim communities in Rakhine state is no longer a domestic one as the Muslims from the conflict areas are fleeing to regional countries such as Malaysia and Thailand. Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project building in Rakhine state and Chin State is still not free from complaints by local residents that the project implementers fail to release EIA/SIA reports as well as conduct thorough consultation with local residents on the project’s future impacts in their lives. Moreover, the project is hard to be believed a safe route for India unless the conflict in Rakhine is resolved peacefully.

So the question for India is, in such kind of situations, how Modi’s government can create any room of interest for Myanmar democrats differently. The recommendations below are essential for pitching for greater connectivity between India and Myanmar:

- More people-to-people consultation on the Look East Policy in both countries;
- People and actors from North East India States and Western Myanmar States as main stakeholders in implementing the Look East Policy;
- Promote better human rights and environmental responsive investments in Myanmar including at KMMTTP;
- Build direct flight connection between Yangon and New Delhi.

Emergence of Subnational Governance in Burma/Myanmar

Dr. Ms Nyo Nyo Thinn

Member of Parliament from Yangon Region, Myanmar

New governance institutions after 2010 Elections (Executive)

- Creation of State/Region Governments has been the most significant change in new Constitution!
- 14 States /Regions (7 States & 7 Regions) led by Chief Ministers were appointed by the president
- 6 Self-administered zones or divisions and one union territory containing the capital Naypyitaw

Executive

- The Chief Minister and cabinet ministers are drawn from among the members of the parliament. The appointment process for chief ministers involves President selecting a state/region parliament member possessing the required qualification, who is then approved by the parliament.
- As a candidate may only be rejected for proven failure to meet the constitutional qualification, effectively the selection of the Chief Ministers is entirely in the hands of the President, with the proviso that he or she is a member of the state/region parliament. It is important to note that the member selected by the President is usually an elected member, but may also be drawn from the military appointees.

Legislature

- 14 Regions / States Parliament
- The parliament is composed of two members elected per township and additional elected representatives for each of the “national races” comprising greater than 0.1 percent of the state/region population
- The Commander-in-Chief appoints military representatives equal to one-third of these elected members (and thus one quarter of the total), the same proportion as in the national legislative institutions.
- One of them is to be the Minister of Security & Border Affairs.
- Speakers of Region/State Parliament play huge role depending on his willingness to change and its institutional capacity!
- Some parliaments have been marginalized by the cabinet and relatively inactive.
- Chief Ministers participate the sessions, but they are accountable ultimately to the President, not to their parliament.

State/Region Legislative Lists
(Schedule Two of the Constitution)

Judiciary

- States and regions have a High Court consisting of a Chief Justice and between three and seven judges. The High Court supervises subsidiary district, township and self-administered area courts.

- There is no independent judiciary service. The state/region Chief justice is nominated by the President, in consultation with the Union Chief justice and the judges by the Chief Minister, also in consultation with the national Chief Justice.
- The nominations are submitted to the state/region parliament for approval, but as with other posts, the parliament can only refuse the nominations with “clear proof” that the nominees do not meet the qualifications.
- However, the state/region parliament can impeach High Court through an investigation and two-thirds vote, but only at the instigation of the President or Chief Minister.
- All courts are subordinated to the national Supreme Court, which has final appellate authority over other levels, including resolving “disputes, except the Constitutional problems, between the Union Government and the Region or State Governments.

Constitutional Tribunal

- For issues of constitutional interpretation, including constitutional disputes between regions, states and the union, power rests with a separate Constitutional Court of the Union.
- The President and the speakers of the two national representative bodies appoint the nine members of this body in equal share, and there is no appeal.

Advocate General

- The state or region government also includes an Advocate General, nominated by the Chief Minister (with the same pro forma approval by the parliament) to provide legal advice and guidance.
- The Advocate General is accountable to both the President and the Attorney General of the Union through the Chief Minister.

Financial Decentralization

- Finances for states/region bodies, such as the High Court and Advocate General, as well as those activities in Schedule Two of the Constitution, are included in a state and region budget.
- Fiscal decentralization is taking place, but in a mixed and limited way. It is prepared on a department by department basis, and union transfers are usually included in national budget.
- Limited scope for the state/region government to make inter-sectoral allocation decision.
- Approval of the parliament is necessary, yet the budget is subject to central review and influence in the Union Financial Commission which decides which funding requests will be integrated in the Union Budget.

HR management

- Region or state governments can form civil service organizations as needed, but only according to union civil service regulations by coordinating with the Union Government in advance.
- To date there are no civil service commissions in the states and regions apart from appointment of school teachers!

Institutional Capacity of Myanmar's States and Regions

- Ministries without own staff/office
- Administrative responsibilities remain quite limited since major activities have been centralized.

- Much rely on the activities of General Administration Department (GAD) managed by military-led Ministry of Home Affairs
- Drafting capacity including Procedures & rules of order
- Limited regional influence over FDI
- Local political issue or central-local relations has not been in debate by NLD

Challenges

- No Clear Mandates , Weak Information Systems
- Poor HR management, Budget to be transparent
- Constitutional framework @ Legislative lists
- Lack of Elected local government/ Municipal councils
- Civil society movement as modest
- Oversight & central coordinating institutions
- Moderate Inclusion: ethnic @ gender composition ,Participation
- Political @ strategic skills
- Budget literacy ,Drafting skills

Concluding Remark

- Much left to be done!
- Degree of Decentralization to States/Regions is very limited and Myanmar is still a relatively centralized country.
- Beyond politicians, CSO begin discussion on subnational governance issue such as electoral system and the presence of military representatives in local parliaments. (REFERENCE: States & Regions in Myanmar, MDRI-CESD, 2013)
- There are large geographic areas of contested or hybrid authority in which other actors such as customary leaders, non-state political actors and non-state armed groups play key role in local governance.
- Regional and Ethnic parties often raise to increase powers of states/regions exploring federalism, sharing-revenue from their natural resources, highlighting ethnic issue such as...using minority language instruction in schools, appointments of ethnic teachers and civil servants etc.....

A note on China Factor in India-Myanmar Relations

Dr. Sanjay Pulipaka

Currently Fellow at the ICRIER-Wadhwani Chair in India-US Policy Studies

China shares approximately 2,204 kms border with Myanmar. Historically, there has been considerable movement of people and goods across this border. Establishing control on the porous Myanmar-China border has always been a difficult enterprise. As a consequence, armed groups with different ideological persuasions often moved across the Myanmar-China border. For instance, in 1950s Chiang Kai-shek led Kuomintang (KMT) troops, pursued by Chinese communists, moved into Myanmar territories. The US, through Thailand, reportedly supplied some military equipment to the KMT troops based on Myanmar-China border without the consent of the government in Yangon¹. Thus during the initial years of the Cold War, Myanmar was considered as staging ground to combat the communists in China.

In addition to the anxieties experienced due to the KMT presence, China-Myanmar relations in 1960s experienced strain, as Myanmar became an important destination for Chinese export of 'Maoist revolution.' Chinese authorities reportedly supported the Communist Party of Burma (CPB), which was scaled down by late in 1970s.² The need to ensure faster development of landlocked provinces such as Yunnan, prompted Chinese authorities to work towards improved relation with Myanmar, as it provided access India Ocean.

In the post-Cold War period, China-Myanmar relations witnessed significant improvement. This has got a lot to do with political developments in Myanmar. As the military regime suppressed the student protests in 1988 and annulled the 1990 election results, Myanmar came under increasing punitive sanctions of the western governments. China came to the support of Myanmar on international fora such as the UN. China used its veto power to prevent anti-Myanmar resolutions being adopted in the UN Security Council.

Given the western sanctions and the Chinese support to the military regime, it was no surprise that China emerged as a major economic player in Myanmar in 1990s and 2000s. For instance Chinese investments (including investments from Hong Kong) amounted to \$ 20 billion, which was approximately half of the total \$41 billion FDI in Myanmar during 1989-2012.³ While these numbers are impressive, Chinese investment in manufacturing sector of Myanmar has been marginal. Chinese investments have been substantially in extractive sectors such as oil and gas, mining, and power sector. Due to this excessive focus on extractive industries, Chinese economic engagement in Myanmar received some setbacks in the recent past.

The suspension of Myitsone Dam on Irrawaddy River was one of the first setbacks encountered by Chinese companies in Myanmar. There was an opinion in the public that construction of a large dam on the upper reaches of Irrawaddy will have deleterious impact on the economy of Myanmar, as the Irrawaddy is considered to be the lifeline of Myanmar. There were concerns that appropriate environmental impact assessment studies were not conducted, local communities were not made partners in the project. Moreover, about 90 per cent of the electricity generated would be used by the China. Due sustained popular protests, the Myanmar government suspended the construction of the dam.

On the other hand, a natural gas pipeline connecting China to Bay of Bengal through Myanmar has been operationalized last year. The operationalization of this pipeline is in consonance with Chinese Two-Ocean Strategy and fulfills a long cherished Chinese ambition to connect to the Indian Ocean. From the perspective of Chinese, the oil and gas pipelines such as the one in

Myanmar is aimed to reduce Chinese dependence on Malacca Straits which currently account for about 80 per cent of energy transit.

While the operationalisation of the pipeline demonstrates China's single-minded pursuit of its objectives, there have been concerns in Myanmar about the environmental costs and absence of proportionate benefits to local communities. Some locals argue that it is indeed ironic that while Myanmar is experiencing blackouts, its natural gas is being supplied to China.

Similar concerns have been raised regarding a Letpadaung Cooper Mine in which Chinese companies had considerable stake. In 2010 an agreement was signed between Wanbo (Subsidiary of Chinese state owned enterprise), Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd (UMEHL), and Government of Myanmar. As per the agreement the Wanbao would be entitled for 51% of the profits and UMEHL would get 45 % and Government of Myanmar about 4 %.⁴ However, the Letpadaung Cooper Mine witnessed protests from local communities for its land acquisition policies and for its alleged disregard for environmental concerns. As a response the Myanmar government constituted a committee chaired by Aung San Suu Kyi, which noted that the Letpadaung Cooper Mine project lacked transparency in operations and there was near absence of social and environmental assessment. As a recommendation the Committee suggested changes in profit sharing mechanisms and greater corporate social responsibility activities. However, there seems to be renewed conflict between the company and the local population in the area.

It is interesting to note the renegotiation of the copper mine project may have opened the doors similar demands in different parts of the country. For some in Myanmar, the re-negotiation of contracts in extractive industry may appear attractive, as it may result in equity, enhanced environmental standards and greater financial resources to government. For a regime that is experiencing political transition, availability of additional financial resources gives greater space to maintain allegiances and reach out to various politically constituencies.

These developments hint at growing challenges to Chinese engagement in Myanmar. In 2013, Chinese companies invested \$407 million in Myanmar compared to \$4.35 billion and \$8.27 billion in the previous two years, respectively.⁵ However, it is still too early to say that Chinese influence is declining in Myanmar. This is because, China reportedly has strong networks with various politically salient groups in Myanmar. Armed ethnic groups such as United Wa State Army (UWSA) reportedly have strong relations with various formal and informal groups across border in Myanmar.⁶ Further, China has been actively facilitating talks between armed ethnic groups and government of Myanmar.⁷ The peace talks between armed groups and the Myanmar government will determine the trajectory of political transition in Myanmar. Given the reportedly close relations with some of the ethnic groups and its business relationship with others, China continues to have leverage in Myanmar.

India-Myanmar-China relations

Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli

Professor in Chinese Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University

India has been watching carefully the unfolding political and strategic situation in Myanmar partly based on its own national interests of stability and countering insurgency in the contiguous northeast, expanding mutually beneficial economic relations, working with a fellow non-aligned country and balancing the growing influence of China in Myanmar, specifically as these are related to influencing the northeast, Indian Ocean and regional security. India is concerned with the recent Chinese rhetoric of Arunachal Pradesh being its “southern Tibet”. Also, the dispute at the tri-junction between India-Myanmar-China is yet to be resolved. China had also exerted much pressure on India and Myanmar to accept and further the BCIM regional initiative. The visits by Indian Prime Minister (after nearly a quarter century) restored a semblance of Indian presence in the region. The infrastructure projects at Kaladan, road connectivity projects and free trade area with the region are other efforts for concretizing India-Myanmar relations in the light of the heavier influence of China in economic, political and strategic aspects of Myanmar. In late June 2014, Indian Vice President and Myanmar President were invited to Beijing to participate in the 60th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence cobbled with China by these three countries. This also suggests to an element of cooperation and coordination between the three.

Nevertheless, while the recent changes in Myanmar were traced mainly to the United States efforts, India is closing watching the changing fortunes of China in this country. For since 1988, China evolved substantial relations with Myanmar. The beginning of the twenty-first century marked a major boost in the China-Myanmar relations with further expansion and deepening in various fields. China supported the seven-step political reform in Myanmar and its economic and investment interests have increased further with economic reform in Myanmar facilitating China’s going abroad. The Kokang clash in August 2009 led to influx of refugees into Yunnan and China raised the issues of border stability and national reconciliation in Myanmar. Bilateral relations boosted after it was upgraded to “comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership” during Thein Sein’s May 2011 visit to China. However, the outbreak of the Kachin clash since June and suspension of Myitsone project on 30 September had affected the relationship. This was further complicated by the western engagement with the new government led by Thein Sein. Aung San Suu Kyi’s release on 13 November 2010 and her participation in the by-election held on 1 April 2012 had created a new atmosphere for Myanmar changing the international situation thereby affecting the bilateral ties which demands rethinking on the part of China.

Nevertheless, the high-level visits and comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership underscored the deepening and expanding relations. But the suspension of Myitsone dam has hard hit the bilateral relationship. Nevertheless, safeguarding core interests such as territorial integrity and sovereignty and cooperation on joint projects, joint patrol on the Mekong River, non-traditional security issues, political and administrative exchanges etc continue unabated. Interestingly, China’s position on ethnic armed insurgency in Myanmar became clearer as China pledged that it would not accept and support any groups that would carry out anti-Myanmar government movements in border areas. However, successful transformation of the ethnic armed groups in Myanmar controlling the border areas will have implications for China.

In the wake of US rebalancing in the Asia-Pacific region, Myanmar's relations with the US is going to have impact on China-Myanmar relations. China's strong ties with Myanmar is helping Naypyidaw to expand ties with other countries as some countries see Chinese penetration in Myanmar as a major concern. Moreover, Myanmar has managed to gain international legitimacy and diplomatic support through its engagement with other countries in the recent time. This will make room for foreign enterprises to invest in Myanmar competing with the Chinese enterprises which have been in Myanmar during the long period of western economic sanctions. China has made huge investment in various sectors of Myanmar economy becoming the largest investor and trading partner under its "go abroad" strategy. Now, it has to safeguard its interests taking into consideration the changes taking place in Myanmar and the international challenges.

India is watching how China is dealing with the new government in Naypyidaw which is trying to distance from the past military junta following the 7 November 2010 election. In order to garner legitimacy and facilitate the ongoing national reconciliation process, Naypyidaw has made steps to win the public support at the same time making ground to engage with the western countries. Therefore, China has to rethink its Myanmar policy in the face of western engagement with Myanmar and successful holding of elections including Aung San Suu Kyi's participation in the April by-election. Beijing has stressed its neighbourhood diplomacy in the wake of these developments to safeguard its interests as China already has made strategic inroads into Myanmar to get access to the Indian Ocean thereby expanding its influence in the region.

India and Myanmar in Regional and Sub-regional Multilateralism

Dr. K Yhome

Fellow at Observer Research Foundation, a New Delhi-based public policy think tank

Myanmar's opening up and India's renewed focus on its neighbourhood have a huge potential to positively impact the several regional and sub-regional multilateral initiatives. India and Myanmar are geographically positioned to help each other in strengthening each others' ties with South and Southeast Asia through regional multilateral initiatives. India and Myanmar share membership in several regional and sub-regional groupings - either as founding members or have joined existing groupings including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); Mekong-Ganga Cooperation (MGC); Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC); Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation (BCIM); South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – Myanmar is an Observer; Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); Brahmaputra-Salween Landscape Conservation and Development Initiative (BSLCDI); Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS); and the Milan Naval Exercise.

The most significant development in the recent past has been Myanmar's transition from military to civilian rule and its re-engagement the international community. The changes in Myanmar have far-reaching consequences internally and in its relations with major powers. An area where the reforms inside Myanmar also have demonstrated positive outcome is in regional and sub-regional forums. The first positive outcome of course has been Myanmar becoming chairman of ASEAN in 2014. Myanmar had to forgo its turn for chairmanship of ASEAN in the past primarily because of its internal issues and faced with opposition from within ASEAN and also from the Dialogue Partners. Hence, the fact that Myanmar is ASEAN chair gives it the opportunity to play a leadership role in the region and also in accelerating Myanmar's re-integration with the regional and international community.

Secondly, Myanmar hosted that third BIMSTEC summit in May 2014. This has given a major boost to the sub-regional grouping that has been unable to take off since its inception. Thirdly, the reforms in Myanmar have also encouraged regional countries to step up regional projects including the India-Thailand-Myanmar Trilateral Highway and the BCIM economic corridor. During 2012, India has committed to build new bridges to further help complete the highway. A task force on the BCIM economic corridor was set up and the first meeting last year. Myanmar has also been actively participating in regional military exercises including in the Milan exercise. Another area where multilateral cooperation among India, China and Myanmar has been initiated is in environment conservation. A trans-boundary initiative called the Brahmaputra-Salween Landscape Initiative to manage the rich biodiversity in the region. All these developments are encouraging. However, let's examine a fundamental question: that is what is the attitude of India and Myanmar towards regional and sub-regional multilateralism? Or what are the norms and principles that have guided their approaches towards regional multilateralism?

Soon after independence, both India and Myanmar have played leadership role in multilateral initiatives particularly their role in the formation of the Afro-Asian Solidarity, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), and the Panchsheel initiative. Both countries were conscious of their hard earned independence and have always valued autonomy in foreign policy making. Hence from

the beginning, peaceful co-existence and neutrality in foreign policy became the guiding principles in shaping their foreign policies.

In the post-Cold War period, because of their domestic compulsions and also because of external factors, new ideas on regional multilateralism were very much considered. There are three important external factors that have played a critical role in shaping these ideas. The first factor is the forces of globalisation. In a globalised world, both India and Myanmar realised that the advantages of being a member of multilateral groupings, particularly economic groupings, were much higher than not being a member. If this was true at the global level in organisations such as the WTO, it was also true at the regional level. The second factor was the success stories of regional multilateralism such as the European Union and ASEAN. This also encouraged several regional and sub-regional multilateral groupings to mushroom in different parts of the world, including in Asia. The third factor was the role of institutions such as the Asian Development Bank. The ADB has been deeply involved in regional cooperation and integration throughout Asia by providing technical advice and financial support to regional multilateral initiatives in Central, South, East and Southeast Asia. A good example is the Greater Mekong Sub-region (GMS).

As a member of a regional and sub-regional multilateral forum, a country can take advantage of initiatives that promote physical connectivity, whether power grids or in building economic corridors. Greater integration and cooperation also provide access to new markets, resources, and investments as also in the promotion of regional public goods such as in addressing common issues ranging from disaster relief to health epidemics. A country can also leverage the strengths of other members in areas where a country lacks capacity. The benefits are not only economic; security, political and environmental benefits are also substantial. Because several security and environmental challenges are trans-national in nature such as terrorism, piracy, or natural disasters such as cyclones and tsunamis, they require regional cooperation.

Myanmar's earnestness to reintegrate itself with the region and India's rethink in the way it looks at the region both provide enormous opportunities for the two countries to work together in regional and sub-regional multilateral initiatives for mutual benefits. There are three ideas that are driving this new regional approach. There is a realisation that a country's destiny is linked to the wider region. Second, regional diplomacy is guided by self-interest and not merely about sentimentalism ensuring greater success. Third, borders are seen as gateways and connectors and in this changed approach sub-regions have become key focus in regional diplomacy. When the ASEAN Economic Community comes into being in 2015, Myanmar will greatly benefit. India can push for Myanmar's membership in Indian Ocean Rim Association and also for full membership in SAARC. This will further strengthen Myanmar's ties with South Asia and India's ties with Southeast Asia.

India Myanmar Military Cooperation - Securing the Commons

Rahul K Bhonsle

Founder Director of Security Risks Asia

Preview

India and Myanmar have a symbiotic relationship over the years. There are ongoing efforts to expand engagement in various dimensions given important role that Myanmar plays as India's links to South East Asia. Myanmar also assumes importance in India's Look East Policy. India's military engagement with Myanmar has increased considerably in the recent past though the potential has not been fully realized. Given removal of sanctions by Western countries on the Myanmar government scope of this relatively unexplored area of engagement has considerable expanded. The advantages from defence cooperation transcend to providing a proximate strategic dimension to the relationship which will be mutually beneficial in weaving a cooperative security framework with a view to combating numerous nontraditional security challenges in the region varying from terrorism to piracy and people running. A review of the Indo Myanmar Military cooperation as a part of expansion of connectivity and possible way ahead is therefore felt necessary.

Preview of the Paper

The Paper will discuss importance and prospects of India Myanmar Defence and Military Cooperation to include (1) Significance of Military Cooperation in general (2) Importance – India – Myanmar military cooperation (3) Current Status and Comparison with China (4) Tatmadaw – Role in Transition (5) Projections (6) Anticipated Spin Offs. While the title suggests military but for the purpose of the discussion military is held synonymous with defence cooperation.

Significance of Military Cooperation - General

Military cooperation is an accepted paradigm of interstate engagement in international relations contributing to overall peace and stability. Viewed from a Realist perspective, engagement between militaries creates a "Balance of Power," preventing asymmetry that may lead to change in status quo if a state assumes military predominance in a region. From the Liberal point of view military engagement drives cooperative and collective security. The emergence of non-state actors enhances significance of military cooperation between States. Contemporary Iraq, parts of which were run over by the Islamic State (IS) is an appropriate example. It is now evident that defeat of a non state militia which had taken advantage of Iraq's weak military capability will need effective cooperation between militaries as adversarial as that of the United States and Iran.

In the context of nontraditional security threats as terrorism, piracy and drugs running defence cooperation between states assumes increasing importance given the transnational nature of the menace. At the same time defense cooperation is seen as the last mile in engagement between two countries and emerges from congruence in political, diplomatic, economic, trade and social engagement. Defense diplomacy has received relatively lower priority in Indian diplomacy so far, of late there is realization that this can play an important role in enhancement of overall relations between countries.

Commonly Accepted Vectors of Defence Cooperation

Defence cooperation is an institutionalized activity comprising of a number of vectors to include high level visits, strategic partnership agreement/Memorandum of Understanding (MOUs), Staff Talks, Military Training, Training and Maintenance Teams, Military Technical Cooperation – Sales and Follow up, Intelligence Sharing, Joint Crisis Management, Joint Border Management and so on. High level visits include interaction between top military commanders such as Defence Ministers, Commanders and Chiefs of Staff and subordinate staff officers to enhance understanding and build rapport to provide a direction which is in consonance with the aims and objectives of the government. Countries also ink strategic partnership agreements or MOUs on specific issues such as training or administrative and logistics support. Training or joint conduct of activities be it courses of instructions equivalent to military education at various levels in academies and exercises in the field is one of the most common action undertaken. Military training teams can be provided to countries when asked for.

In some cases where militaries lack the capacity in terms of repair and maintenance facilities these can be provided. Defence sales known as military technical cooperation implies export or aid of military equipment. On the operational side there can be intelligence sharing, joint border management, assistance in conduct of operations or joint border management. Thus the variety of activities that can be carried out is fairly widespread. Many countries conduct whole range of activities while others may restrict to a select few based on necessity for a joint approach or in making up deficit in a particular aspect such as counter militancy where training from a military that is proficient can be sought. Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief is another area where military cooperation is increasingly significant particularly in South and South East Asia.

Significance – India Myanmar Defence Cooperation

India and Myanmar are neighbours sharing a common land as well as maritime boundary. Apart from the 1600 kms plus land boundary between stretched across some of the scabrous terrain with forests and hills, there is maritime boundary with India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands stretching just a few nautical miles from Myanmar's numerous island territories such as Coco Islands. There are also common nontraditional security concerns between the two countries be it militancy, drugs, trans-border crime and smuggling. With military/para-military deployment on the borders mainly for containing sub conventional threats outlined above there is a necessity for greater cooperation between India and Myanmar's security forces. The maritime dimension is assuming increasing importance given the increased economic activity anticipated in the Bay of Bengal after resolution of maritime boundary by Bangladesh with India as well as Myanmar through international arbitration. Securing maritime commons containing oil and gas fields will be a key challenge.

Lastly China's aggressive posturing in recent years has created a degree of uncertainty and disquiet in the region. Chinese influence was dominant in Myanmar for many decades and has somewhat receded in recent years. India China relations are marked by cooperation amidst contention arising from the boundary issue as well as a competition for influence in South and South East Asia. India and Myanmar could therefore find a partnership prudent to balance the influence of China.

Present Status of Indo Myanmar Defence Cooperation

Based on the metrics of defence cooperation identified earlier Indo Myanmar Defence engagement can be outlined now. In terms of high level visits there has been frequent interaction with the

Indian Defence Minister and Service Chiefs having visited Myanmar in 2013 and reciprocal visits from the other side. In January 2013, then Defence Minister Mr A K Antony was in Myanmar while in October November former Army Chief General Bikram Singh (Retired) was also in Nay Pyi Taw. India and Myanmar signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Border Cooperation on May 8, 2014, which aims to enhance cooperation between the two security agencies in ensuring peace, stability and security along the long international land and maritime border between the two countries.

Staff talks are presently in the form of joint meetings between representatives of both the countries. The fifth Indo-Myanmar Regional Border Committee meeting was held at Imphal in July, “to further consolidate the understanding and cooperation between both the countries”, as per an Indian government local press release. The Indian delegation in these talks is led by the army formation commander in situ that is General Officer Commander of a Corps. The Myanmar delegation is led by Commander of the North West Command.

Formal agreements between the two countries are mainly related to training activities. Intensity of activity on the military training front has increased of late with a number of courses, joint training and exercises conducted each year. India has provided two war gaming software packages “Combat decision resolution” and “Infantry company commanders tactical trainer” customized for training of the Myanmar’s Army as well as five hang-gliders during the visit of General Bikram Singh to the country in 2013. Myanmar has been demanding more vacancies on courses of instructions being conducted in India. Maritime cooperation is an important facet of Indo Myanmar defence cooperation with joint exercises such as Milan, port visits and exchange of officers on training courses.

In terms of military technical cooperation that is sales and follow up, small quantities of equipment has been provided to include rocket launchers, mortars, rifles, radars, night-vision devices, Gypsy light vehicles, bailey bridges, communication and Inmarsat radio sets as well as road construction equipment like dozers, tippers and soil compacters to the Myanmar’s armed forces. Intelligence sharing has been an ongoing activity while assistance has been provided for disaster management to Myanmar in the recent past particularly during Cyclone Nargis.

Myanmar China Military Relations – Extended “Paukphaw”

At this stage a review of China Myanmar military relationship may be in order. Myanmar China military relations are an extension of the, “Paukphaw,” or sibling dyad. High level visits of military leaders of both the countries are an annual and regular feature. Xu Qiliang, vice chairman of China’s Central Military Commission met with Myanmar’s air force commander-in-chief Khin Aung Myint, pledging to boost cooperation between the two militaries in May this year. “Looking ahead, we should continue strategic communication, further practical cooperation, strengthen coordination on multilateral occasions, and work together to safeguard tranquility and stability in border areas to contribute to the development of bilateral relationship,” said the Chinese general. Khin Aung Myint voiced his gratitude for China’s enduring support for the Myanmar armed forces, and said that Myanmar will continue to enhance cooperation with China to advance military-to-military ties.

There is an agreement for training of Myanmar air force and naval officers who have been dependent on People’s Liberation Army (PLA) establishments over a period. In terms of military technical cooperation China offers favourable terms to Myanmar for arms purchases with interest free loans and credit on soft terms. An outcome has been the large quantum of Chinese equipment held by the Myanmar armed forces. A survey of Myanmar’s military equipment profile as per details culled from Military Balance 2013 revealed that 62 percent of a vehicle platforms such

as tanks and Armoured Personnel Carriers and large quantum of Artillery, AD guns and missiles are of Chinese origin. 100 percent frigates have been built with Chinese assistance, while 84 percent fighter aircraft are also from China. There are a large number of patrol craft which have been constructed in Myanmar's Naval Dockyard Sinmalaik with Chinese assistance. Myanmar Air Force is considering purchase of J F 17 Thunderbird combat fighter co-produced by China and Pakistan This is a favourable option given low cost of approximately \$ 30 to 40 Million.

China is also heavily investing in strategic infrastructure in Myanmar. The Shwe gas pipeline is operational with flow of gas from gas fields in the area as well as Kyaukphyu port to Yunnan. A railway line and road is planned to run along the gas pipeline but is recently suspended due to protests by civil rights groups in the country. Development of ports in Hainggyi, Coco, Sittwe, Zadetkyi Kyun, Myeik and Kyaukphyu is planned, with the last named already operational. There are however no indications of naval bases so far. Port visits by Chinese naval vessels to Myanmar are common. Two Chinese naval vessels, Zheng He training vessel and Wei Fang defense vessel called on the Myanmar International Terminals Thilawa (MITT) in Yangon's Thanlyin township as its second leg of Asian voyage in May.

China has also an important stake in border management as two major militias, the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and Kachin Independence Army (KIA) remain active on the China-Myanmar Border. UWSA is the military wing of the United Wa State Party (UWSP) which forms part of the Wa Self-Administered Division and has not joined the talks being held by other ethnic groups with the Myanmar government. Unconfirmed sources believe that China is holding back the group from joining peace talks. Myanmar's military chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing is reported to have paid a special visit to Wa State in April to convince them to join the peace process but failed to endear himself to, Bao You-ri, the younger brother of Bao You-xiang, the ailing leader of the UWSA. UWSA is Myanmar's largest insurgent group with approximately 25,000 regulars backed by a large militia reserve as per Antony Davis a columnist of Asia Times. China also intervened in Kachin State in 2013 to force the Myanmar Army and the KIA to a cease fire indicating influence that is exercised in the country's internal affairs.

Tatmadaw Role in Transition

Tatmadaw (Myanmar Army) has a major role to play in transition of the country from a military junta ruled state to a progressive electoral democracy. The present status can be that of a, "Praetorian transition." The Tatmadaw thus performs dual role, military professional and parliamentary/civil administrative. Military personnel hold all the security portfolios and are guaranteed representation in the cabinet and parliament and also have a veto over constitutional change. General Min Aung Hlaing is frequently said to be the last word on all major decisions of the government including the present impasse over Constitutional Amendment which will allow Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to participate in the Presidential elections in 2015.

General Min Aung Hlaing has called for the military to project an image of responsibility. This could be interpreted as to intervene in the political process where it is perceived against, "national interests," what these are will be defined by the armed forces leadership. This does provide a leeway to the military to block political processes.

The economic interests of the Tatmadaw in Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings and the Myanmar Economic Corporation have been diluted to some extent. Thus the process of transition to a professional military can be said to be underway. There have been a number of interactions with Western militaries in the recent past. US Pacific Command Deputy Commander Lieutenant-General Crotchfield gave a lecture to the Myanmar National Defense College and some Western

militaries are planning to expand cooperation but are held back due to apprehensions of engagement with the Tatmadaw accused by human rights groups of gross violations. Suffice to say the scope for greater interaction is under consideration.

Projections – India Myanmar Defence Cooperation

Given the importance of Myanmar as a neighbor – land and maritime, increased defence cooperation is a primary requisite and will be an important facet of greater connectivity between the two countries. Expanded cooperation is envisaged through increase in high level visits and staff talks which need to be formalized at the level of services chief in addition to the border committee meets at present. Increase in the number of joint activities with focus on counter terrorism, maritime security and disaster management could be envisaged. Joint border management and maritime patrols are an operational necessity and a framework for cooperation has to be evolved to intensify engagement. Enhanced training to include joint exercises, additional courses of instructions and pilot training the latter being a requirement from Myanmar could be envisaged. Doubling the number of vacancies for courses could be considered. Possibility of placing training and maintenance teams in Myanmar needs consideration.

There is a good opportunity for military sales with partial lifting of sanctions on Myanmar when India is looking for opportunities to expand defence exports. Assistance in construction of offshore patrol vessels could be offered as Myanmar is looking for alternatives and India has developed considerable ship building capability with a number of government owned and private ship yards engaged in this activity now. Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations through an extended network are another option to drive cooperation. All these activities carried out in tandem would lead to greatly expanded engagement between India and Myanmar in the years ahead.

Conclusion - Anticipated Spin Offs

The advantages of India Myanmar defence cooperation are considerable. Some of the essential facets are summarized herein. Enhanced security of regional commons both land and maritime would be a favorable outcome particularly addressing large number of nontraditional security threats to include containment of terrorism, piracy, maritime crime, drugs, arms smuggling and people running. This will enhance security in the Bay of Bengal area as a whole. An exchange of knowledge and expertise is another obvious benefit as both militaries have scope for learning from each other. During the visit of Indian Army Chief General Bikram Singh a proposal for establishing Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) on similar lines as that operating in Bhutan since 1960 and Botswana and Lesotho in 1978 and 2001 respectively was discussed as per a report in the Jane's. This should be taken to a logical conclusion. Joint designing and manufacturing of ships and naval craft is another option which Myanmar is keen to explore. Mirroring a professional military may be an intangible outcome as professionalism of Indian armed forces will rub on the Tatmadaw and greatly assist in overall political transition in the country. Finally balancing Chinese influence, an essential factor for India as well as Myanmar will be a major advantage presenting a united front and inducing Beijing into a cooperative regional security framework in the long term.

Building Democracy: Challenges Within

Sithu Aung Myint
Senior Journalist, Myanmar

Let me recollect a brief history of Myanmar. In 1948 Myanmar gained independence from the British. The period between 1948- 1988 was a Parliamentary democracy era led by General Ne Win. After independence peace lasted only 83 days before civil war was launched by armed attacks from the Burma Communist Party. On January 31, 1949, the ethnic Kayin joined the fray, and by the 1960s nearly all the ethnic groups had launched armed rebellions against the government.

In 2010 Aung San Suu Kyi was release and a reform process followed with general election being held in the country. But Myanmar is still in transition to democracy, which experts define as the early stage of the relaxation of dictatorship. Today the country is in a critical situation with challenges within and outside to sustain democracy in Myanmar.

The military and President U Thein Sein's government, including the opposition and ethnic forces, acknowledge that the country is still unsure of adopting the democratic system and has not even come close to stepping through the doorway to democracy. Everyone realises that they have to deal with many challenges.

The biggest challenge is the country's long-running civil war, which has done a considerable amount to block the path to approaching the doorway to democracy.

To become a democracy, the country needs to stop this internal conflict and maintain stability. Upon taking office, President U Thein Sein proclaimed that his government was sure of achieving democracy. Unfortunately, the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), which for 17 years had honoured a ceasefire agreement with the government, resumed fighting during U Thein Sein's term in office. The conflict expanded when the Ta-aung Palaung and Kokant got involved, with the fighting resulting in the displacement of nearly 100,000 people.

The government has now been facing internal armed conflict for 60 years.

The second challenge to democracy is the communal violence that started in Rakhine State and later spread to other areas of the country, including Meikhtila, Bago, Yangon, Mandalay and northern Shan State. Hundreds of people have died and more than 100,000 have been made homeless as a result.

While concern about this conflict has been growing among the international community, the Ministry of Home Affairs – which is responsible for dealing with the problem – has turned a blind eye. This creates considerable uncertainty about Myanmar's prospects for forming a democracy.

Another roadblock to democracy is the former army officers who are attempting to restore the old status quo of military domination over the government. After the 2010 election the Tatmataw was divided into three groups. While younger officers have continued with their military roles, others have taken places in parliament and still others are working to strengthen the Union Solidarity and Development Party.

If the 2012 by-elections are any indication, these former military officers will face heavy defeats in the 2015 election, provided they are free and fair. Some of these potential losers are now scrambling to institute an electoral system based on proportional representation, which would be of benefit to them. But the opposition and ethnic groups have bitterly opposed this move, creating a standoff between the two sides.

The next hindrance to democracy is the oppression of the media, which is still in the early stages of freedom. Nobody can deny that press freedom is a necessity in a democratic country. The government has relaxed censorship of print media but retains strict control over broadcast media.

Initially, press freedom was granted and journalists were allowed to criticise parliament, the military and governmental organisations. But now it seems as if the government does not want to accept such criticism, which they have responded to by making threats and taking legal action against journalists. Four reporters and CEO of Unity Journal were recently sentenced 10 years' imprisonment, revealing the ugly side of the government's relation to the media.

The main people who are responsible for dealing with these challenges are the military and former military officers, but the opposition and ethnic groups also need to lend a hand. Democracy will remain far away as long as these obstacles are not removed.

India-Myanmar Border Development – Nagaland Perspective

Mr. K. Filip Sumi

Senior Journalist and Columnist based in Dimapur, Nagaland

India's efforts to foster extensive economic and strategic relations with Southeast Asian nations especially Myanmar is something which can bear rich fruits only when the land connection through the northeast region is accorded a reasonable share of attention.

Various north-eastern states including Nagaland have borders with Myanmar, and Nagaland shares a border stretch of 215 km. Naga population in Myanmar is more than 2 lakh. The Nagas living in the border areas of Myanmar and Nagaland being economically and educationally backward look upon their brothers in central Nagaland for help. Given this reality, the economic development and stability in the north-eastern region and a better infrastructure along its borders, is crucial for India's Look East policy to see the light of the day.

Road Sector

Despite the realisation that infrastructural development at the borders is a necessity if India is sincerely looking for stronger ties with Myanmar vis-a-vis the Look East Policy, the development at the border is dismal. One can take the instance of Pangsha village under Tuensang district of Nagaland connecting Myanmar. Despite the existence of International Trade Centre (ITC) at Dan village along the border near Pangsha village, there is nothing that can be called as a road. When there is no proper road connectivity, one cannot expect the people to carry on cross-border trade activities. Owing to lack of road infrastructure, trade between the two sides at the ITC is almost absent except for a short period only once in a year when vegetables from nearby Naga villages in Myanmar and Indian made goods from Nagaland side are sold/bought or bartered.

Even the very infrastructure of International Trade Centre itself is a mere shed. Since there is no proper road, bikes mostly of China made have become very popular for commuting and transporting goods even though less in quantity. Those who cannot afford bikes travel on foot all the way to Lahe or Khamti in Myanmar which are the only two trading towns in the Naga areas of Myanmar.

The price of these second hand bikes starts from Rs 35,000 in Indian currency. Since there is no other mode of taxis, these bikes are used as two-wheeler taxis. These bike-taxis have also become a source of income for many people. Even to hire these bikes is a costly affair with fares as high as Rs 5000-7000 to commute from the last Naga village of Pangsha in Nagaland to Lahe town in Myanmar. The fare depends upon negotiation though. However, these bikes cannot be taken towards main town or district headquarters in Nagaland because of legal issues involved in driving foreign made vehicles unless there is legal registration and formal approval from the appropriate authorities. But in the case of immediate border areas, police are easy-going and flex rules on these bikes as the border people started questioning the significance of an International Trade Centre if foreign goods cannot be sold/bought/exchanged or used.

Education Sector

The education scenario along the border especially on Myanmar side is very pathetic as most schools have classes only upto Grade 4 and that too the medium of teaching continues to be in Burmese. There is only one English subject which is not enough to learn basic English. So one

can understand that Burmese language is being imposed on the border people especially Nagas. This education policy renders the Naga population at borders with no future outside Burma.

There is one school at ITC Dan called the Straightway Mission School run by a Naga from central Nagaland. This is the only school where the medium of teaching is English. So many parents from both sides of the border construct makeshift camps in the surrounding areas of the school for their children to dwell and study. While their parents work in the fields in the villages, these children as young as 4-5 years and the eldest around 12 years stay together, collect water, firewood, prepare their own food and study at ITC Dan, 30 kms away from parents. There is no motorable road, and it takes a whole day on foot from this Shinnyu village to reach the school.

Many Naga families in Myanmar border divide their children to study in two countries – India and Myanmar. Naga children in Myanmar are sent to English medium school at the border or even inside Naga villages in India because parents think there is better future in English education. While some children are sent to Burmese medium schools since there is no gainful employment possible in Myanmar without knowing Burmese. For many, a preferred job is joining the Myanmar military force which does not require much educational qualification. And to study Class 10, one has to go to Lahe and Khamti town which remains inaccessible for many border villages. For college, one has to travel all the way to Mandalay, which is practically impossible due to poverty and transport problems. Another interesting fact is that most Naga villages have two identities, or names—one in Burmese and the other in local Naga dialect. For instance, once inside Myanmar, Henpu village is called Penyu, Shiu is Solou and Shiphu is called Chonkhao.

Health Sector

Health is another sector where the border people go through unimaginable sufferings. There is one Primary Health Centre at Pangsha village at the border in Tuensang district of India but without a doctor. Only few health personnel with a compounder operate the basic health centre which caters to a number of villages both at the border and Myanmar villages. Villagers from Myanmar side including Shiu, Henpu, Kingphu and many villages even from Indian side travel on foot to Pangsha PHC to avail whatever little medical facilities are available. The nearest hospital is located more than 30km away from the border at Noklak on India side. Pregnant woman are carried on foot by the villagers to Noklak. After such tortuous experience, not all are lucky with safe delivery. There are many instances when they give birth midway. Having an ambulance is a far cry. When medicines are not available at Pangsha PHC, the few employees have to hire bikes to go to the hospital in Noklak and pay from their own pockets.

Another alarming health issue is the case of HIV and AIDS that is threatening the border village of Pangsha. According to Nagaland State AIDS Control Society (NSACS), at least 104 people from Pangsha village area were tested HIV positive since 2006. This figure was reported from the four villages in Pangsha area namely Pangsha Old, Pangsha New, Dan village (International Trade Centre) and Wontsoi, with a total population of hardly 6000. However, the prevalence of HIV is expected to be much higher since the data collected are only records of people coming voluntarily to get tested at the Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre (ICTC), Noklak and Tuensang District Hospital.

People attribute the reason for the high prevalence rate of HIV to the early 1980's when the border area was infamous for illicit drug trafficking and gun running. This led to a high rise in the number of Injecting Drug Users (IDU). However, drug users have comparatively lessened now but pre-marital and unprotected sex with low level of contraceptive knowledge has given

rise to teenage pregnancy resulting in early marriage. When the teenagers are supposed to be still in schools, a good number of them are already parents.

Tele communication sector

To get strong cellular network signal one has to climb mountains or walk around places to get proper signal. Since there is no proper mobile network, people at the border use Myanmar-made Transceivers also known as walkie-talkie. This has become an essential instrument for emergency purposes and also to inform about the movement of cattle in the jungle. People at the border rear Mithun which is a symbol of wealth for them. The more Mithun they rear their social status as rich people goes high. The Transceivers are also helpful especially during emergencies and in matters of life and death.

Conclusion

India talks about Look East Policy but it is important that the Government of India first talk about border development. India's apprehension about the insurgency problem in the northeast has become a stumbling block to development in the region especially at the border. People of Northeast region would feel that they are being treated equally with the rest of the country only if the Government gives equitable development to the region by setting aside the excuse of insurgency. Insurgency should be separately tackled by the government machineries and the case of insurgency should not be an excuse to send only limited development to the region.

India – Myanmar Border Development - Mizoram Perspective

Mr. Lalremruata

Director, Zo Indigenous Forum, Mizoram

Mizoram:

Mizoram is a mountainous region that became the 23rd State of the India in February 1987. It was one of the districts of Assam till 1972 when it became Union Territory. Sandwiched between Myanmar in the east and south and Bangladesh; it shares international border of 404 km with Myanmar and 318 km with Bangladesh. Mizoram occupies an area of great strategic importance in the north-eastern corner of India.

Mizoram covers an area of approximately 21,087 square kilometer, according to 2011 census the total population is 1,091,014, The state's gross state domestic product for 2012 was estimated at Rs 6991 crore (US\$1.2 billion)¹. About 20% of Mizoram's population lives below poverty line, with 35% rural poverty². The state has about 871 kilometers of national highways, with NH-54 and NH-150 connecting it to Assam and Mizoram respectively. It is also a growing transit point for trade with Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Government of India is establishing good ties with the neighbouring countries especially with eastern neighbours, both economically and politically. With the growth of global economic development, Asia in particular India set up a new policy known as "Look East Policy" where sectoral trade link will be established with the Far-east countries. Burma became prominent and significant for India as a land bridge for the success of the policy. Thereafter, India began to engage the ruling government in Burma aggressively.

Border trade:

Indo-Myanmar Border Trade Agreement between the governments of the Republic of India and the Union of Myanmar was signed on January 21, 1994 (effective from April, 12, 1995) with the goal of formalization of border trade practices and set such trading activities in a congenial model. The agreement initially provided for cross border trade in twenty two products, mostly agricultural/primary commodities produced in the trading countries. A list has been added from time to time. In practice, the agreement actually does not go much beyond according a formal sanction to exchanges traditionally going on between the local populations in the border areas of the two countries. But it holds significant symbolic value in terms of furthering economic ties between the two countries.

As per the agreement in barter/exchange system only 22 items are allowed and there is a dearth of commodities that can be exchanged. These 22 listed items are grown and available on both sides of the border and Myanmar has a surplus of such products. Myanmar being an industrially undeveloped country and the demand for manufactured products in the country are by and large met by imports. Many such products are smuggled to Myanmar from India. Indian traders are demanding to expand the list to include especially manufactured goods which can be traded under the barter system and thereby traders can reap the benefit from border trade.

Border Trade in Mizoram

Trade in Border with Myanmar is one of the clauses enshrined in the Mizoram Peace Accord of 1986 signed between the MNF and the Government of India. There has been considerable

delay in implementing this invaluable clause of agreement which is the only course available to landlocked Mizoram for accelerated economic development. Mizoram shared international border with Burma and Bangladesh.

As of now the followings were the (identified) border trade centre in Mizoram

- i) Zokhawthar Land Custom Station (Myanmar Border)
- ii) Zorinpui Land Custom Station, (Myanmar Border)
- iii) Integrated Check Post, Kawrpuichhuah – Tlabung (Bangladesh Border)
- iv) Border Trade Centre, Saikhumphai – Vaphai (Myanmar Border)
- v) Border Trade Centre, Saisihchhuah –Sangau (Myanmar Border)
- vi) Border Trade Centre, Thingsai (Myanmar Border)

Apart from this Trade Facilitation Centre will also set up at Lawngtlai

Land Custom Station at Zokhawthar, which has been set ready by Mizoram government for commissioning, for LCS in Zorinpui Ministry of Commerce has approved Rs 57 crore NBCC is entrusted to execute the implementation of civil works.

The government also extending border trade to Bangladesh , on 10th December 2012 a border trade facilitation centre at Mizoram-Bangladesh border Tlabung town in south Mizoram's Lunglei district has been jointly inaugurated by the visiting Bangladesh state minister for Chittagon Hill Tracts, Mr Dipankar Talukdar, and Mizoram Trade and Commerce Minister, Mr Lalrinliana Sailo, the centre was constructed at a cost of Rs 1.08 crore and funded by the Union Commerce Ministry.

Bangladesh has a large trade deficit with India which is offset by surpluses with other countries and just over 15 % of Bangladeshi imports come from India. Though Bangladeshi exports to India receive tariff concessions under the South Asian Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA), they account for less than 1 % of India's total imports. Though Indian trade with Bangladesh is small in relation to India's overall trade, the Northeastern states can maximize this trade and accrue benefits which can help boost the economies of these states which are highly dependent on Central funds. Improvements in the transport, storage and administrative infrastructure at land borders would yield substantial benefits. Greater harmonization and cooperation in customs administration and banking relationships would also be highly beneficial.

Prospects of Border Trade

The highway project to link the North-East to Thailand via Myanmar, A trans-national highway of Kaldan Multi Modal Transport Project that connect Sittwe Port, are all opportunities in the making for the region, which is also rich in natural resources. These new initiatives would rediscover, renew rejuvenate the age-old cultural and historical ties between the people of South-East and North-East India. In return, greater interaction would undoubtedly boost trade, commerce and tourism prospects in the entire region.

Further, the following areas may be taken up for detailed investigation to determine the feasibility and economic viability in long run from the view point of Mizoram:

- (i) Teak Processing: Myanmar's area near the Indo-Myanmar border has abundant growth of teak. High transportation cost to Yangon and Mandalay prohibit carrying it for processing to these centres.
- (ii) Cutting and Polishing of Precious Stones: As Myanmar does not possess expertise in cutting and polishing for its large deposits of precious stones; this can be undertaken in the border area of Mizoram.

- (iii) **Stainless Steel and Aluminium Utensils:** There is substantial demand for stainless steel utensils in Myanmar. As there is no local production, demand is met by imports, especially from Thailand.
- (iv) **Cutting and Polishing of Granite:** Myanmar has large deposits of raw granite. Cutting and polishing facility is not available and there is lack of capital and expertise. This facility can be developed in border area.
- (v) **Safety Matches:** Units for making safety matches can be set up in the border areas of Mizoram, utilizing the forest resources available on Mizoram-Myanmar border.
- (vi) **Handloom Products:** Handloom and handicrafts play a big role in the economy of Mizoram and employ a large labour force. There is a demand for handloom and handicraft items in Myanmar. So, Mizoram should explore such market in Myanmar and should encourage setting up more manufacturing units of handloom products where women involvement is very high.
- (vii) **Medicinal Plants and Herbs:** Assam, Mizoram, Manipur, Tripura are rich in plants and herbs. All medicinal items are listed under essential import items in Myanmar as there is no local production. Therefore, commercial exploitation of medicinal plants has to be taken up in Mizoram.
- (viii) **Tourism:** Tourism is one of the fastest growing industries not only at the global level but also in Indian context. In North East India also there is ample scope to boost the tourism industry particularly in eco-tourism, rural tourism, health tourism etc. If border trade is developed in full swing, the state has enormous scope to develop tourism which can bring lot of earnings for the local people.
- (ix) **Wine:** Government of Mizoram has legalised production of wine from recently, this will be a great opportunity for the grape growers in the state, according to News report Hnahlan village in Mizoram-Myanmar border village are the largest producer of wine in village India, more than 80% of the village were engage in grape cultivation.
- (x) **Horticulture and floriculture:** In horticulture and floriculture, Mizoram is a significant producer and global exporter of Anthurium (over 7 million a year) and Rose. Mizoram has accomplished this horticulture success and exports in 2009, with just 6% of its cultivated land dedicated to horticulture and floriculture, indicating a large potential for further growth and economic integration with other Indian states as well export driven economy. In 2013, the area dedicated to horticulture and floriculture increased to 9.4% of 1.2 million hectares potential.

Constraints of Border Trade

The various obstacles and constraints that come in the way of developing border trade can be attributed to various problems emerging from and within North-east region. Some of these constraints are summarized as follows:

- (i) The infrastructure position of Mizoram is not at all satisfactory at present. Warehouse, cold storage is essential for storage of perishable export/import items, but such facilities are not available at yet. The proposed LCS is not rail linked.
- (ii) Another problem is that difference of exchange rate between official and unofficial rate. Official rate is quite lower than market rate for which traders are not interested to transact the trade at formal rate. Also Foreign Exchange Centre has to be installed around Zorinpui LCS and Zokhawthar LCS.
- (iii) Lack of trade related research is an important element for the underdevelopment of business and trade. There has been a lack of research on various aspects of border trade

in NEI, which may contribute to the better understanding on the need and problems of business, trade, and industry including border trade, and above all the sustainable development. To boost the border trade in NEI, appropriate research should be undertaken to explore the problems and prospects of border trade.

- (iv) Lack of entrepreneurship is also another hurdle. Like other less developed countries, one factor responsible for lack of development of north-eastern states is inadequacy of motivated entrepreneurs. They mostly are interested in government jobs. Truly speaking, the entrepreneurial career is chosen either by compulsion or by chance, not by choice. Many organizations like NECON, SISI, DIC, ICM, IIE, etc are conducting EDP programmes throughout the state for entrepreneurship development from time to time, but the success rate is not satisfactory and it is about 25 per cent only (Singha, R.K.P.G. and Kabra, K.C: 2006).
- (v) Reserve Bank of India and Director General of Foreign Trade are yet to open office in Aizawl or near border area. So, traders have to go either to Guwahati or elsewhere to obtain required documents like Importer/Exporter Code No. and other related papers. It is also a hurdle to the local entrepreneurs to obtain such documents for the purpose of trade with Myanmar (Singh, Nixon: 2007).
- (vi) Trade activity has been done only in LCs (Letter of Credits), in order to do business there need banking operation but the internet connectivity is not not reliable causing problems for the businessman.
- (vii) Food Tasting Laboratory, need to establish in Champhai or Aizawl as the nearest one was in Imphal and Guwahati.

Conclusions

The overall position of trade, industry, border trade in the state is not so encouraging at the present context. There is no industry in the state worth mentioning. There are no medium or large scale industries in real sense, only small, tiny, cottage and village industrial units exist.

As of now Trans-border trade has failed to provide any benefit to local people and there are procedural hiccups for obtaining licenses as well apart from the failure of law and order and absence of proper infra-structures³. But India Ambassador to Myanmar, Gautam Mukhopadhyaya says that Mizoram has the potential to cater to the needs of Myanmar with regards Education Service, Health Service, Power supply, Industries and other sectors, the settlers along Mizoram border are communicable in different Zo dialects, which, he think, creates a good and convenient situation for business venture.

Trading activities are also carried out on small scale basis. Traders are collecting the goods from mainland India and selling in various markets as there are limited local products available. Some foreign goods are also available in large quantity as a result of opening up of border trade. Trade is basically on informal basis as goods are not locally produced items in border trade; goods involved in the trade are mostly of third world country products

At present the basic infrastructure facilities required for the development border trade like good road, transportation, warehousing, telecommunication, power, post and telegraph, services like banking, export-import credit, issuance of certificate of origin, financing, civic facilities training institutions are not as per the requirement. These are the need of the hour and without this border trade cannot be developed in the right direction.

Another important aspect is that economic integration of north eastern states is very crucial at the present juncture to reap the benefit as a greater market as all the states in the region are small in size. The concerned state governments have to play a crucial role and should

influence the central government in this regard. Proper planning and the policy framing are vital for the development of border trade in Mizoram and will become a source of revenue for the state. It will also contribute to the growth of the economy of the state. To get one's competitive advantages, the need of the hour is to become competitive through efficiency, productivity and most important, better management.

If the North-East is to march on the road to prosperity a lot of homework and improvement of infrastructure is called for. Investor friendly policies and maintenance of law and order should be on the top of the government agenda.

National Highway 54 which goes through Mizoram should be improved on priority basis. Another very important suggestion is that Mizoram Chamber of Commerce should be authorized to issue certificate of origin, as the local traders have to go to Shillong to obtain such certificate from Meghalaya Exporters' Chamber of Commerce which is the only authorized unit to issue it in the entire north-east and it is a very problematic procedure. Government, Social Organizations should play a vital role and organize seminars, workshop, symposiums and publicity as a means of mass awareness programmes to the people in general and traders in particular so that entire north-east can reap the benefits from border trade of Mizoram.

Annexure:

Items of Barter Trade listed in Border Trade Agreement (BTA) with Myanmar

List of 22 items initially included under BTA Public Notification on 10th April 1995

1. Mustard / Rape Seed, 2. Pulses and Beans, 3. Fresh Vegetables, 4. Fruits, 5. Garlic, 6. Onion, 7. Chillies, 8. Spices (excluding Nut Meg, Mace, Cloves, Cassia and Cinnamon), 9. Betel Nuts and Leaves 10. Food Items for Local Consumption, 11. Roasted Sunflower Seeds, 12. Minor Forest Produce (excluding Teak), 13. Bamboo, 14. Tomato, 15. Reed Broom, 16. Coriander Seeds, 17. Resin, 18. Ginger, 19. Sesame, 20. Tobacco, 21. Katha, and 22. Soyabean.

List of 18 Additional items Public Notification on 7th November 2008

1. Bicycle spare parts, 2. Life saving drugs, 3. Fertilizer, 4. Insecticides 5. Cotton fabrics, 6. Stainless still utensils, 7. Menthol, 8. Agarbatti, 9. Spices, 10. Cosmetics, 11. Leather footwear 12. Paint & Varnishes, 13. Sugar & salt 14. Mosquitoes coils, 15. Bulbs, 16. Blades, 17. X-Ray paper & photo paper 18. Imitation Jewellery.

Additional 22 items listed Public Notification on 27th November 2012

1. Agriculture machinery/equipments/tools, 2. Bicycle, 3. Bleaching Powder, 4. Coal, 5. Eatable Oil, 6. Electrical & Electric Appliances, 7. Fabricated steel products, 8. Garments/ readymade garments/clothes, 9. Handloom and Handicrafts Items, 10. Hardware/minor construction materials and electrical fittings, 11. Lime, 12. Medicines, 13. Milk Powder, tea, edible oil, beverages, 14. Motor Cycle & Motor Cycle Spare Parts, 15. Other Items such as electronic/musical instruments, stationery item, torch light, 16. Plastic item: water tank, buckets, chairs, plastic pipes and briefcase, 17. Rice, wheat, Maize, Millet & oats, 18. Scented tobacco, 19. Semi-precious stone, 20. Sewing Machines, 21. Textile fabrics, 22. Three Wheelers/car below 100 cc.

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India-Myanmar Border Areas: Connectivity, Prospects and Concerns - First Hand Account

Mr. Kabi Gangmei

Currently serving as Director of Asia Pacific Baptist Aid (APBAid)

With the new government in Delhi settling down to business, and flurry of media focus on Look East Policy (LEP) there is renewed hope for the people of North East India for possible opening and economic advantages, particularly by those in the states along India-Myanmar borders. The hype is generated with the expectation that such an initiative will entail a major shift in India's economic and foreign policies viz Asian countries to the east, and the indigenous people in the region will reap the benefits by connecting to them. LEP will bring connectivity, and like the crucial piece in a jigsaw puzzle, it will be key to accelerate development activities and transform outlook of the people on both side of the border.

Such connectivity will greatly benefit the region, and long-term outcomes will be the gains of India as whole.

- Local communities living both side of the border will receive increased infrastructure development - roads, waterways, electricity, communication etc, it will then integrate them together for economic and cultural gains.
- Great boost for border trades which will become useful outlets for Indian manufactured goods.
- Employment opportunities – better livelihood and wean away the youths of NE India from militancy.
- All weather links to Kunming via Steelwell road, Mandalay-Yangon via Moreh, and to Sittwe via Zochachhuah by road and Kaladan riverways - NE India will be no more land-locked thereby setting it free from isolation and boost to interconnectivity.
- NE India will move closer to mainland India with alternative links, and emotionally unite with their cousins in Southeast Asia through trades and interconnectivity.
- Willing cooperation and integration of the communities on both side of the border for common mutual interests – Lisu (Yobin), Naga, Kuki-Chin, Mizo/Zomi, Meitei and others.

Not so much to show...

However, in spite of over 20 years past since launching of LEP in 1991 and much proclamation in the media there is not much to showcase LEP. Construction of roads and infrastructure development is yet to pick up its momentum. Unlike those time bound projects initiated by China in Myanmar, the projects of LEP today are half done. Even for much vaunted Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMMTTP) in South Mizoram, construction of roads and border post at Zochachhua are yet to be completed. Road link and air link between Imphal and Mandalay remain a distant dream.

It is disheartening to see that most of the people along India-Myanmar border areas remain blissfully unaware and not ready for the opportunity thrown up by LEP. Though Imphal, Kohima and Aizawl may be just few hours drive away there is no attempt to communicate these prospects that will impact their livelihood. In one of my meetings with villagers from Kasom area in Ukhrul district of Manipur, it was informed to me that life along the border is hard as they struggle to survive amidst militancy and no development activities - without health care, schools non-functioning, no modern media reaching them, etc etc. He finally added a punch line

saying that only during election time there was heavy demand for roads and buffaloes from Myanmar as WWII truck “Shaktiman” carry people around and there was need of meat for electioneering. Villagers perceived that such important policy of the government like LEP remains on paper only in Delhi.

Meanwhile there had been heavy construction of fencing going on near Moreh, suppose to be major outlet to Southeast Asia. For a common man in the border, such a picture of security fencing gave the prospect of militarization, besides disrupting the local cross-border markets it also divides border communities as the British colonialists did to them earlier. It is an irony that intellectuals are debating on connectivity and free trade, while there is forced division of people in reality.

Challenges of ground reality

Reality check along the 1,624-kilometer long India-Myanmar borders gives a picture of difficulties and backwardness. It will take quite an effort and time to overcome these barriers. It is true that the region has been cold shouldered by successive governments in Delhi and Yangon. India's nation building process since Independence did not take connectivity to Southeast Asia as priority.

The region faces all round difficulty and challenges, as they are listed below. These can be impediment to rapid development process, and any authority pursuing well being of its people should be serious enough in its effort.

- Difficult terrains, and thickly forested areas with tropical diseases abounding
- Thinly populated areas – small and scattered villages, primitive economy
- Majority live in abject poverty
- Extremely backward – no roads, no health care, no schools, no electricity, no postal service
- Very low in human resource development – low literacy rate, especially among women, no media worth to mention
- Full of militants – these days we heard about warlords who control drugs, illegal mining (jade), gambling dens and even human trafficking
- Illegal drug trades, arm smuggling and illicit trades of exotic animals
- Violent ethnic conflicts
- No effective governance - corrupt politicians and corrupt administrators

On 20th July, 2014 we read a news item in Nagaland Post, entitled as “Myanmar woman held for child trafficking” stating a Myanmar national staying in Churachandpur, Manipur was caught by the volunteers on July 17th. She was alleged of taking two girls from the area to Tamu in Myanmar for cash benefits.

Again on 21st July, 2014 the Sangai Express, a popular daily in Imphal released a news item ‘Stolen vehicles smuggled to Myanmar’ claiming that there was strong indication that rackets of vehicle lifters are smuggling stolen vehicles to Myanmar. Earlier on 24th February, 2013 a Colonel-rank Defence PRO and five others were arrested at Pallel, Manipur by police after they were caught allegedly carrying illicit drugs.

The region is rich in natural resources

- Forests, mountains, rolling valleys and streams
- Rich bio-diversity
- Minerals – coal, oil, limestone, chromites, rare earth and others

- Rich river systems – Brahmaputra, Barak and Chindwin
- Dynamic people – provided they are given the opportunity
- Strategically located – culturally borderline between Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia

For the indigenous people in the region land is the greatest resource for their survival as a people and for their livelihood. Big or small, each community has their own area of land handed down from their forefathers, and any mega project such as hydel project or any extraction mine will devastate lands beyond repair, and bring miseries to the people. There is thus lurking fear among the local people, expressed or perceived, on both sides of the border that any major project initiated would displace and leave them as destitute. Years back we heard a report appearing that a mega dam would be built across Chindwin River at Tamanthi with Indian assistance. The plan has been fortunately shelved for the time being, but how long can it be suppressed when there is great demand for electricity and for investments across the border, notably from China.

There are concerns

Given complex ethnic diversity in the region along with economic backwardness, the region's civil societies are raising questions on the impact of major projects undertaken on tribal lands once LEP facilitates opening of the borders.

I would like to list down three important concerns expressed by the communities dwelling along the borders.

(1) Tribal land rights, traditional customs and heritage

Along the whole length of India-Myanmar borders communities and tribes are dissected by the borderline. This unnatural division has brought in disruptions of normal socio-economic flows, and much to the discomfort of the establishment in Delhi and Yangon, the communities on both side of the borders have intense desire to freely interact and mix with their brethren across the border.

I am listing down here below those tribes divided by the borderline -

(Arunachal Pradesh) Mismi, Lisu(Yobin), Tangsa/Tangsang/Hemi/Pangmi, Tutsa, Wancho
 (Nagaland) Konyak, Yimchunger, Khamniungan, Pochury
 (Manipur) Tangkhul/Somra Tangkhul, Maring, Anal, Lamkang, Kuki, Zou, Paite/Chin
 (Mizoram) Mizo, Tiddim Chin, Lai/ Zomi, Mara, Pang, Bawm, Khumi

In the Indian side there are protections given to tribal groups under 'special' provisions of Indian Constitution – in Nagaland it is Article 371A, Mizoram with Article 371G and Arunachal Pradesh with Article 371H. However, in Manipur the protection given to tribal groups under Article 371C is vague, and there is further need of clarity and enhancement.

In case of any land acquisition arising out of LEP project implementation, procedures laid down by the Government should be strictly followed. Such adherence and transparency will help in convincing the local population. I would like to reaffirm suggestions

- Enough safeguard to land rights for local indigenous communities so that they will continue to live without fear of losing their traditional land, customs, livelihood and habitation.
- Maintain transparency in all dealings – local affected communities are well informed, and public at large understand that national investments are done well.

- Enough compensation for any loss due to project implementation. Engage with the local leaders so that such compensation goes to the genuine owners and the rate is acceptable and reasonable.
- Benefits of such interconnectivity be given to the local communities on priority basis, be it trade or employment.
- Involve and engage local leaders – representatives, planners, experts, intellectuals from the region for wider gain and support.

(2) Migration of outside people into NE India

Human migration from outside into the region is a great concern for indigenous people. Such migration can be in two ways – one, steady human flows in search of space and better life. Today, we do not have to go far to find proof of illegal influx from Bangladesh. Demographic canvass in some of the districts in Assam is changing fast, viz Dhubri, Karimganj, Nagaon, Bongaigaon and Barpeta. Even far away Lunglei areas, pockets of Imphal and Dimapur show such illegal migrations are a reality. With ethnic conflict raging on in Rakhine State in Myanmar, there is a concern that Rohingyas might be flushed out into NE India.

Another point of migration is when mega projects are facilitated under LEP, labour forces will be imported from mainland India, or from some neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Nepal. This is true with the completion of many big projects in region labour forces were left behind to settle down and got enrolled into voter list.

(3) Conflict points for regional power rivalry

Travelling through the urban centres along the borders in Myanmar side one may notice that most of the big business and investments are dominated by nationalities with dual citizenship, in this case I mean Chinese who hold either Thai or Myanmarese identity besides having a known origin in China. Much of the machineries and tools used are of Chinese origin. Much of the development thrust in North Myanmar today is currently done from China, and one is left with lingering question what our Government in Delhi has been doing. We understand that a huge Indian investment was done for Rakhine offshore gas exploration, but when time came for sale it was given to other.

First Look North East, then Look East

I quote Prasenjit Chowdhury, Kolkata-based commentator who gently reminded Government machineries in charge of LEP to focus first on the development of NE India, and move on to link with Southeast Asia. It should be seen as bringing primarily local benefits because the people of NE India by becoming key stakeholders in this important initiative will bring benefits of security and peace along the border. They will be willing participants in the nation building process.

For such important initiative in the sensitive region it is good to move forward with purpose, one at a time, not too fast but invest more on human resource development. With that effort the young people of the region today will become assets in future.

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